

Tropical

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
AROUND THE WORLD

news

JUNE 2008



Editorial Ramblings

This has been a rather difficult month, to say the least - especially the first half. We were scheduled to leave the Philippines on 12 June. You know this from last month's edition, so cutting a long story short, we were still awaiting Grace's visa the day before we were supposed to leave, so we re-booked our flights to 1 July, to arrive in the UK on 2 July. Grace did have the option to collect her passport from Manila the day before we left, but this was the day we

still had to get the last items packed, the stuff we are shipping to the UK collected by the freight company and our other things taken by our Uncle to the family farm in Pangasinan. We were also entertaining friends and family who had come to say goodbye - several folks staying overnight. Obviously, for Grace to travel to Manila for her passport and then return, then fly the following day was not anything like an easy option - indeed as it turned out, barely, if at all, possible. We had other problems too. You will hardly credit this lot. The day before our flight, Uncle was stopped by the police while on his way to collect our things to take to the farm (he was also due to transport us to the airport the following day). The police spotted that the tax on his van had expired, so he couldn't drive it until that had been sorted out. The freight company only gave me a **price** late in the morning and then would have had to arrange to collect our things once the price had been agreed - and they had only priced the freighting as far as Liverpool - not door-to-door to Stoke-on-Trent. On top of that, the internet service provider had a problem so I couldn't even hook-up to the internet to communicate with all the people I needed to. I had to inform our landlord that we needed to stay longer, as well as our new landlord in England that we would be delayed but still wanted his property - and would pay the rent for the intervening time. I was also chasing the British Embassy who were most unhelpful (as only Embassies can be). I also had to get in touch with the company who are storing our things in the UK as they were expecting us to be arriving on the earlier flight. On top of this, re-booking our flights was no picnic either, as the Qatar Airways computer system was down when I first called them and, despite their promise to call me back that too didn't happen, so I had to call again and wait - and wait - and wait to actually get to speak to someone. They even charged me \$US90 for changing our flights! Then, while I was on the telephone to the airline, more visitors arrived. Our other problem is that Helen left us this morning to return home to Mindanao in the southern Philippines, as she was no longer expecting us to be here and had already booked her ticket - it will take her three days to get home. As I complete this section, we have decided not to freight our things to the UK. It was going to cost several times more to move the things from the port in the UK to our home than ship it all the way from our home in the Philippines to the UK. Our things in Qatar will also be shipped to the Philippines instead of the UK. We will be very thankful to get out of here and survive Manila airport (the most user unfriendly airport I've ever had the misfortune to travel through).



Cover photograph: A Carabao in Agno, Pangasinan in the Philippines.

Photograph above: An unposed photograph of Dad, asleep with two of his grand-children, in our home in Sta. Monica.

Inside back cover: Helen and JP shortly before Helen left our home after 4 months of taking good care of us all.

Back cover photograph: Alan and Grace at Starbucks in Baguio. *Photograph by Little Lad*

Your prayers are needed...

for Joseph:

Guess what, I just get over my very serious depression, and am back to being my usual hyper active self, swimming, occasional golf, cycling etc. when BANG I end up in hospital with a broken collar bone. My fault entirely. I knew I was getting too cocky on that bicycle. I wanted to move across the road to move into "The Village". Normally I would stop, get off, wait patiently for a space in the traffic, then walk across wheeling the bike. But this time, smart Alec me, I look in my mirror, think I have enough space to move to the centre of the road, but I don't and I get hit by an oncoming motor scooter.

Had a couple of nights in hospital, mainly because I was covered for hospitalisation and not for out patient. Lots of visitors from my fellow AA members. In fact when I regained consciousness on the road (fortunately I was wearing a helmet), I saw a familiar face in front of me. For the life of me I could not put a name to it, which was weird, as I knew him very well. It was a fellow AA member. He stayed with me for 3 hours until I was safely out of Emergency and installed in a private room. Then he text other members to tell them where I was. So I did not lack for visitors. AA is a great fellowship. They have been there for me throughout my depression and right from the moment of my accident. Is it any wonder that I think that Someone is looking after me?

As well as the hospital I'm attending a British sports trainer who gave me massage, put my muscles back in place and did some acupuncture. Only 7 quid a session. I see him again in a week, by which time I expect to be much better.

Well, that's all for now.
God bless,
Joseph

for Marc:

We ask you to pray for Marc (aged 70) who is in very poor health and who suffered another seizure just a few days ago. He also fell and broke his arm for the second time. Please also pray for Tessa, his wife, who is taking care of him.

for Bilal:

Bilal is recovering slowly (from surgery) and unfortunately he fell down the stairs in his office and he hurt his back again and has been undergoing physiotherapy for sometime now.

for Gerry:

Gerry is still in poor health and needs your prayers for his ulcerated leg and the pain he is suffering from arthritis. Please also pray for Sylvia (his wife) who is doing all she can to take good care of him. They both need your prayerful support.

for Alan, Grace and John:

Who will, we hope, be flying to the UK to start a new life there. We would value your prayers for a safe, problem-free journey, and a happy life in our new home - and a good job for Alan.

and thanks.....

for Grace's settlement visa - at last.

Why 492 West Indians came to Britain - in 1948

From our Special Correspondent

Wednesday June 23, 1948

Courtesy of The Guardian at URL: <http://century.guardian.co.uk/1940-1949/Story/0,,105104,00.html>

What were they thinking, these 492 men from Jamaica and Trinidad, as the Empire Windrush slid upstream with the flood between the closing shores of Kent and Essex? Standing by the rail this morning, high above the landing-stage at Tilbury, one of them looked over the unlovely town to the grey-green fields beyond and said, "If this is England I like it." A good omen, perhaps. May he and his friends suffer no sharp disappointment.

It was curiously touching to walk along the landing-stage in the grey light of early morning and see against the white walls of the ship row upon row of dark, pensive faces looking down upon England, most of them for the first time. Had they thought England a golden land in a golden age? Some had, with their quaint amalgam of American optimism and African innocence. But these had already been partially disillusioned by Flight Lieutenant J. H. Smythe, a native of Sierra Leone and now a member of the Colonial office Welfare Department. He travelled with them from the West Indies and towards the end had given them a little homily.

"I could not honestly paint you," he said to them, "a very rosy picture of your future in Britain." That was straightforward. Conditions were not so favourable as they thought. They would see the scars of war wounds that are still bleeding. Were they highly skilled? No - then it would not be easy to find a job.

"On the other hand," he went on, "if you are a serious-minded person and prepared to work hard in any vocation, you can make your way. It is left to you to win the respect of all those you come across and do your utmost to succeed in whatever sphere you may be placed." Flight Lieutenant Smythe had arranged the immigrants into three groups during the voyage; those who had friends to go to, and some prospect of a job; those, ex-Service men all, who wished to rejoin the Army or the Air Force; and those with neither friends nor prospects. The Colonial Office sent some welfare people. The Ministry of Labour sent a regional welfare officer and twenty assistants. There was no band, certainly, to greet the immigrants at Tilbury; but it was a welcome and, for officialdom, a warm welcome. The men seemed encouraged by it. Mr. Isaacs said in the House recently, "I consider that those who organised the movement of these people to this country did them a disservice in not letting us know." However, one could discover no evidence of 'organisation.' They had seen the advertisement of the shipping company in their local papers - a thousand berths on the troop decks vacant, £28 each - found the money, and in due time embarked with high hopes.

What manner of men are these the Empire Windrush has

brought to Britain? This morning, on the decks, one spoke with the following: a builder, a carpenter, an apprentice accountant, a farm worker, a tailor, a welder, a spray-painter, a boxer, a musician, a mechanic, a valet, a calypso singer, and a law student. Or thus they described themselves.

And what has made them leave Jamaica? In most cases, lack of work. They spoke independently, but unanimously, of a blight that has come upon the West Indies since those who served America and Britain during the war returned home. The cost of living is high, wages are low. Many can earn no wages. Some had been unemployed for two years. One of them considered his chances in Britain (he was a builder), and said laconically, "If I survive - so good; if I don't survive - so good." Another, lacking this philosophy, said with a bitterness unusual in the company, "When the situation is desperate you take a chance - you don't wait until you die."

This man has been idle two years. According to him, a working man in Jamaica, married and with a small family, must earn between £6 and £7 a week in order to live decently. But the average working-class family, where the father is lucky enough to be in work, gets between £4 and £5 a week.

Most of the married men have left their wives and children at home, and hope to send for them later. Only five complete families sailed. Two of the wives are Englishwomen who followed their husbands to Jamaica and now return with them to England. One of them, Mrs. Doreen Zayne, formerly, and soon to be once more, of Blackpool, confessed that she did not care for Jamaica and was glad to be home again. She has two children, a boy and a girl. Her husband hopes to find work in Lancashire.

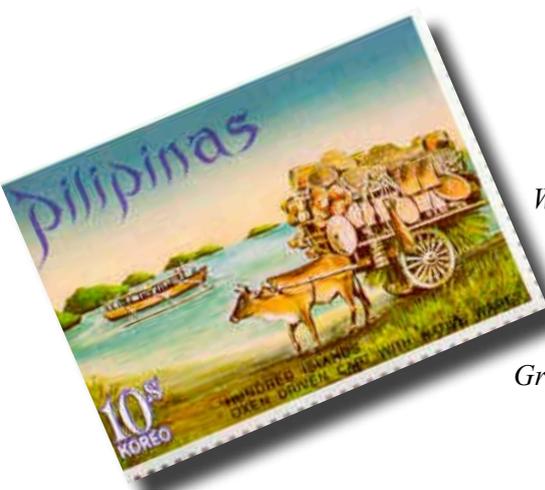
They are, then, as heterodox a collection of humanity as one might find. Some will be good workers, some bad. Many are "serious-minded persons" anxious to succeed. No doubt the folk poets will find fit audiences somewhere. So will the complete dance-band which is journeying to Liverpool at this moment. And the boxer, who is going to meet his manager at Birkenhead, will surely find fights in plenty. Not all intend to settle in Britain; a 40-year-old tailor, for example, hopes to stay here for a year, and then go on and make his home in Liberia.

Their arrival has added to the worries of Mr. Isaacs and the trade union leaders. But the more worldly-wise among them are conscious of the deeper problem posed. Britain has welcomed displaced persons and has given employment to Poles who cannot go home. "This is right," said one of the immigrants. "Surely then, there is nothing against our coming, for we are British subjects. If there is - is it because we are coloured?"

Your Letters

We hope that ALL of you will contribute a few words to this page. All letters published will be done so anonymously. Letters may be edited a little, although nothing will be done to change the meaning or context of anything submitted for publication.

The stamp (left) depicts the Hundred Islands National Park which is in Pangasinan, Grace's home province, and near to where used to we live, in Alaminos.



Hi there folks,

Had your edition of *Tropical News*. Yet again, it makes some interesting (and longer) reading Ha Ha. It is getting that I have to devote special time to the reading of your news. Where I find it from I do not know, as I do not seem to get time to spit these days.

A belated Happy Birthday to Little Lad He seemed to enjoy himself, as did all the others. The time goes and we do not notice it. It seems only yesterday that he was having his 2nd birthday! I must be getting old.

Sorry Alan, but the report on page 11 (*Ed: MOD Backs Plan to Boost Recognition for the Armed Forces*) is the biggest load of bollocks I have ever read! If the British government thought as much of our troops, whether at home or abroad, they would not be treating them the way they have in the past or now! If they had been treated right in the first place, there would not have been any need to have that report in the beginning. It is just a way to try to cover up the contentious attitude they have had for our troops since the 1970's onwards. One only has to look at the rat infested living conditions they expect some of the families of our lads to live in. Look at the way they have treated one of the most loyal regiments in the British army; "The Gurkhas". The government have robbed them and their families blind for years and if they had their way they would still try it on. They call themselves the NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT? I call Tony Blair, and now Gordon Brown, ALI BABA and his 400 thieves (*Ed: Ali Baba didn't have any thieves. He was the good guy who deceived the (40) thieves!*). Take that idiot Peter Hain, our MP. He stated in one of our local rags the other week of how proud he was that the national basic wage had increased by 21 pence per hour? I put a letter back into the paper, asking him how much more hypocrisy was he capable of spouting and asked him if he would even bother to get out of bed in the mornings for a wage that small? I also asked him why does he pay his 80 year old mother the sum of £5,400 Pounds per year out of the administration expenses he claims from parliament. Just for writing his Christmas cards? When he was minister of employment and welfare last year, his priority was to get people off the sick and back into work. Well if that was the case, why was he robbing someone of a part time job and wage by paying his 80

year old mother to do it? As I told him in the press, by taking the work off his mother and letting someone else have it should not cause her any hardship, as he and the government consider the pension they give us pensioners to survive on is very adequate to live on. He did not put an answer in the next edition of the paper. I wonder why? This government are experts at exploitation of millions of people - not only our troops (*Ed: As are all governments*).

Enoch Powell's Speech. "*Rivers of Blood*". Well it was that idiot that brought them into the country in the first place. In the late 1950's, Enoch Powell was Minister of Employment when he brought the first boat load of West Indians into the UK, to work in the sewers and underground railways when our people went on strike. You check it out. That was when they started to get in here first in big numbers.

(Ed: Enoch Powell was never Minister of Employment. He wasn't appointed to full cabinet minister until he became Minister of Health in July 1960. Prior to this, in December 1955, he was made a junior Housing Minister and later became Financial Secretary to the Treasury, but in January 1958 he resigned, along with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Peter Thorneycroft, and his Treasury colleague, Nigel Birch, in protest at government plans for increased expenditure. It is true that Enoch Powell encouraged nurses to emigrate from the West Indies to the UK (when he was Conservative Minister of Health) continuing a (Labour Government) policy started in 1949 (soon after the beginning of the National Health Service on 5 July 1948, at a time when there was an acute shortage of nurses after WWII and when the NHS was expanding rapidly, when the Ministries of Health and Labour, together with the Colonial Office, the General Nursing Council (GNC) and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), began a deliberate policy of recruiting from the British colonies, particularly the West Indies, but this was well after the inflow of immigrants had started, as by 1958 there were approximately 190,000 black and Asian people living in the UK, most of whom were employed in menial positions. One of the early boat-loads was in 1948 when 492 West Indians arrived in the UK, when the Labour Party was in power (see previous page), although small numbers had come in previously (since the early 1900's).

(continued overleaf)

Edward Heath sacked Powell from his Shadow Cabinet the day after the **Rivers of Blood** speech, and he never held another senior political post. Powell received almost 120,000 (mainly positive) letters and a Gallup poll at the end of April showed that 74% of those asked agreed with his speech. This speech transformed Powell into a national public figure and he won huge support across Britain. Three days after the speech, on 23 April, as the Race Relations Bill was being debated in the House of Commons, 1,000 dockers marched on Westminster protesting against Powell's "victimisation", and the next day 400 meat porters from Smithfield market handed in a 92-page petition in support of Powell.

To consider Enoch Powell to be an idiot would be a grave error of judgement. He was considered as being one of the greatest intellectuals ever to grace British politics and was highly regarded by all who knew him. Many suggest that he would have become Prime Minister had it not been for this speech and he would undoubtedly have been one of the very few great statesmen in recent times, if not ever.

Powell was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was a fellow. He began the war as the youngest professor in the Commonwealth (aged 25) as Professor of Greek at Sydney University and a renowned Classicist; he ended it as the youngest Brigadier (aged 32) in the British army, the only man in the entire war to rise from Private to Brigadier. Characteristically he had rushed home from Australia to enlist in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Promotion came quickly - as it did in all he put his hand and mind to, except his chosen career of politics (and that was possibly because of his far foresightedness and his great intellect, which people often misunderstood - as in **Rivers of Blood**).

In August 2002, Enoch Powell appeared in the **List of 100 Greatest Britons of all time** (voted for by the public in a BBC nationwide poll).

Some cracking photographs of Paul and his mates there, Alan. Especially the one of the EWMIK. It reminded me of the time I tumbled my Land Rover on the mountain while gathering sheep many years ago! Having said that I must have wrecked quite a few over the years.

Excellent news of you all coming back to old Blighty! Typical of the cock-up in the Embassy though. Most of them people working there are from public schools (*Ed: Most of them are Filipinos - even the Entry Clearance Officer, who was responsible for our delay*). Perhaps they were not trained to think. Hope Grace gets it back in time (*Ed: She didn't*). Will look forward to seeing you all again and having a pint together up in the *New Inn*. Right, I am going to do some work before someone decides to get the heavy mob after me. Have a good trip over. See you when you're over here. Keep well all of you.

Hi Alan,

I enjoyed looking at the panorama shots - most impressive. I can imagine the work involved with that.

Thanks too for your latest newsletter - much to digest there and all very interesting.

Loved the photos too - and all the baby birthdays - that last pix of JP in the water taken by Grace is a winner, surely? (*Ed: Absolutely! that is what I told her*).

This is all very interesting and great you are expressing your views and reactions as more and more it becomes apparent that we learn the most from sharing ideas and actual experiences. The dry old lecture approach usually doesn't convey anything like as much to people as the heartfelt comments - and you are always sincere in your expressions -- something many people have forgotten entirely as they parrot off what someone else has told them to say...or they learnt at MBA school.

It's fascinating too that you are being given an opportunity to see child development, as I believe we can certainly learn a great deal from the inspiring way in which children behave before we mould them into societies' clones (*Ed: I shared some of this particular item from my **Reflections** page with this reader before it was published in this edition of our magazine*).

In reading another issue (*Ed: May edition*), you have highlighted in other material - Grace's comment that Filipinos if they stay in their country just don't think for themselves because society doesn't want them too - I also saw a parallel with our own societies whereby a great majority are happy to watch inferior mental chewing gum on the tv and become enraptured in so called reality shows, banal amusement trivia and the like ...as that too ensures the mass is kept amused and therefore unlikely to rock the boat in anyway, or think independently...so we may not be very different really. Most of the Western media today is controlled by a handful of giant groups and they are the ones mesmerising most people into a trance-like state of copycat behaviour...which ensures they all buy the same brand name gear and foodstuffs and parade to the same drummer. So not too different really, I suspect. (*Ed: I completely agree*).

Bye again, and thanks for all the information.

Hi Alan and Grace,

Thanks for the newsletter. I don't know how much credit for the photography is due to the quality of the camera and how much to the skill of the photographer, but Grace is showing signs of being a very skilled photographer. *(Ed: I keep telling her that, but she doesn't believe me - her camera is a simple Canon Digital IXUS 950 IS (8MP) point-and-shoot model).*

As I told you in my last email, I am fully recovered from the clinical depression that had been plaguing me. In the words of an Irish friend, I am "150% better", which seems true, as I am even more active than I was before, or so it seems. Unfortunately, David has been in and out of hospital to be snatched from the jaws of Death by a hard-working and skilled team of doctors and nurses. I don't know how long he will be with us, but you can be sure that he will go out kicking and screaming. He seems to bounce back so well that it is hard to believe that he is so dangerously ill. In fact there are some very unkind acquaintances of his who have actually spread it around that he is a fraud and that he wheels his little oxygen machine in order to gain peoples' sympathy. Well, I don't think they will have long to wait until they are proved wrong.

You talk about the stupidity of the Filipinos *(Ed: read **Grace's Visa Saga** for another example)*. Well there are some pretty stupid, petty and malicious Brits as well *(Ed: I agree)*. I assume that they are Brits as I think they are members of the British dominated ex-pat club. There are 2 ex-pat clubs in Pattaya: The "Pattaya Expat club" - dull, boring, and very unsociable. British dominated, and the "Pattaya City Expat club", somewhat livelier, more interesting and a bit more sociable. US dominated. Fortunately, quite by chance, I joined the US dominated one. I later went to see the other one. I never felt inclined to repeat the experience.

When I pray for David, I never quite know what to ask for, as recovery is totally out of the question: although he has lived much longer than was predicted by the Bangkok Pattaya Hospital. They refused to take him in about a year ago, as they considered him a hopeless case. The doctor who refused to admit him actually drew his finger across his throat. What a disgraceful way for any doctor to behave in front of a patient. Fortunately, Natch, David's 'housekeeper', refused to take that opinion, and drove him to the Pattaya Memorial, a cheaper hospital. There they not only admitted him, but worked for hours to clear his lungs, and worked on his heart. They have kept him alive ever since. No easy task.

So I just pray for him and leave the rest up to God.

I pray daily for you, your family for all the people you mention in your newsletter, although the list is getting rather long and names not easy to remember, so I do a

kind of package deal. But I always say a special prayer for Paul and for his safety.

The little lad gets more handsome every time I see him: and coy.

Alan, I am a little confused. I seem to have forgotten your reason for returning to the UK. I have checked back through the Newsletters as far as last November, but cannot find the motivation for this move. I assume it is because you have been offered a job. I also assume that your reason for turning down this latest, very attractive offer, is because you feel that your priority is to get Grace a permanent residence visa to UK. Am I right?

(Ed: My sole reason for returning to the UK is so that Grace can, eventually, apply for British Citizenship. It will then make it much easier for her to travel. As soon as she is issued with her British passport it is my intention to leave the UK forever, as it will no doubt have become the Islamic State of Britain by then - or will be close to becoming so. No, going to the UK was not my reason for turning down the job in Qatar and no, I don't have an offer of a job in the UK - unfortunately.)

Isn't Life contrary? For 2 years you have been trying desperately to find a job, and then when you get one, the offers pour in that you can't accept. One because of your bad back, and the other because of the UK offer *(Ed: see my note above)*. However, as we say in AA, everything is as it should be, and there is a reason for whatever happens to us: e.g. I am absolutely sure that there was a purpose for my depression - it was a learning experience which will probably help me in my final years. I have a more active relationship with my Higher Power (not always an easy one) and I have more friends than I had before. I also hope that I am now a little more tolerant, and more at peace with myself than before.

By the way, I have had a good offer for my flat in Malaga. I am now awaiting further instructions from my agent. There may be a snag as I have warned him that I cannot do the usual Spanish thing of under declaring the selling price (I have not been asked to do so, but as the prospective buyer is a cash buyer, I anticipate this possible request).

The strange thing is that it is almost breaking my heart to sell it. I love that apartment. so while I am glad to be offered a good price, I am reluctant to part with it. At present, I do not really need the money, but at 71, it is time to think of liquidising some assets.

Did I tell you that the illegal tenant is out of the flat in Sitges? I have also been awarded costs and rent in arrears (but I'll believe that when I get the money).

Lots of love to you, Grace and the Little Lad,

Hi Alan,

I forgot if I told you or not that your newsletter gets better each time. Hope all is going well with your visa for Grace. I have been in Guayaquil now for about 10 days and it is great. It is so good to be out of Springfield. I am staying on the best street where the Mayor has done a lot of renovation and it is great. My hotel is \$13 a night and it is clean and safe. At any time of the day I can go out of my hotel and the city is so alive. Parades everyday, the adventure of meeting new people, travelling on public transportation. It is good. I don't miss Missouri at all. It was so boring there. I like my job in Springfield because it is security, but other than that there is not much for me.

I have been to the dentist almost everyday. She is such a good dentist a perfectionist in here work. I will never forget the dentist I went to in Qatar. I went there to have my teeth cleaned and she I believe was a sadist. The weather is beautiful at this time of the year. You take care and I hope all goes well in England .

Hi Alan,

I'm glad you're getting things in order. July 1 seems to be a better date. This gives you some breathing room.

The pictures of the British Commandos look great, just as great as the pictures you take. What kind of camera did they use? (*Ed: Except for the group photograph, the camera used was a Nikon E5600 (5.1MP) point and shoot, but this has little to do with the composition - it is the person using the camera that determines the result*). It's interesting that the Commandos no longer looked so menacing during their R&R. Somehow, they became transformed to normal people. I guess the American sense of patriotism in me was shocked to learn that there is no veteran's day celebration in England. I find it incredible that England's heroes living or dead, are not honoured just one day out of 365 days a year (*Ed: We do have Remembrance Day services all over the country on the nearest Sunday to the 11 November - at 11:00a.m. There is also the Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance in the Royal Albert Hall, London at around the same time. The significance of the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is that this is the exact time the Armistice was signed, bringing an end to the disaster that was World War I in 1918*). Is it too much for the British government to make its citizens pause for one day to reflect on those who risked their lives to keep England free? Those soldiers are heroes. If the government cannot acknowledge gratitude to its living heroes, what more of the dead. No wonder families get no respect when they have to wait for years for the inquest to be completed on their son. If only the government can give due respect to its citizens, then perhaps they'll in turn receive respect from the people.

Hi Alan,

That's a very wise move (*Ed: Changing our flights to 1 July*). I was just thinking of you re: all that and how you must be running about like headless roosters!

But now this news assures me you can calm down and enjoy the fun of preparing and anticipating for the move at a time when everything will be under control and no headaches re: the passport etc. as your change of plan must give even the Phils admin time to sort matters!

I've just been in to see about that job you flipped my way re: curriculum writing - they loved all the work I've already done etc, etc ...but then I noticed the one in charge of the curriculum materials and who has been trying to produce them getting fizzy and realised as soon as I saw what they have already done that she was fearful of being overshadowed!!

Oh dear, and then I realised too that they only had a small budget and were probably not able to add to that or be flexible about letting me produce on contract basis. .. no they must have you tied to the desk etc! ..and as I and they know it's half what they should pay me, I suspect they will back off and go for someone far less experienced. Somehow, I'm not sure I'm interested either in doing two months there and receiving only the same as I would at the job I was doing last year in a month. I'd rather do much less altogether and at least get some kind of pro rata reward for effort etc. Just my mentality I suppose.

But unreal, I think, that they are able to pay teachers the full rate but the person who creates what is to be taught is regarded as a lesser being!!! Brains - that's a concept that's long since left the planet I'd say. ..and so all these companies - I teach for quite a few of them - repeatedly send you off with a parcel of tuition booklets riddled with the most simple mistakes. ..and no-one seems to notice because the organisers of the companies are not native speakers, the school principals etc. are not either, and the only ones who know it is wrong are the few native speaker English teachers ...quite a lot of the teachers are second language ones and they don't even know! ie they are Indian or Chinese with n degrees and Masters and PHD's in English etc. but still don't get it! I just shake my head in disbelief and continue in some kind of Alice in Wonderland lunacy.

Oh well - I know you experience something of the same kind of blinkered behaviour over there re: different situations so I won't go on, but I do find I have a short patience threshold sometimes for such stupidity. Not to worry though - we've already learnt that, I suppose.

Much love to you all

Hi there,

Who said life was easy and fair, but the secret of getting ahead is getting started, as you have, and one day you will get there.

Good luck to Grace on her passport adventure and enjoy your trip.

We will say a prayer for you both.

Many thanks for the prayers. My kids just finished school and passed their exams - Sara fourth grade got 95% & Salma 2nd grade got 99%- In addition to a baby of a man who was recovering (from surgery), and my work, it was a living nightmare, believe me.

Thanks for everything and just so you will know, we will be going nowhere this summer as my husband has used all his leave days and I cannot leave him alone here. So it is a hot summer for us here in Qatar.

I can only imagine what you're dealing with Mr. Alan. We're off to France for a few days before going to Canada at the end of the month

Hey Alan!

Well I'm sorry to hear that Grace's visa didn't arrive. I will pray that you make it safely (of course). It looks like I am not going to the Philippines (soon) unless I remain on the ship....but it will be after you and Grace and Little Lad have already left.

Keep me posted with how things are going.

Love to all of you

Hi Alan,

Sorry to hear the news of the cock ups. I sincerely hope that they get it right for you by July.

Friday 13th - what else. Let's hope it gets there soon.

Alan,

Murphy's Law says that anything that could go wrong does go wrong with certain people. I think Murphy's Law applies to you. Like I said, I'm superstitious and I'd be thinking the whole thing over (*Ed: This reader is of the opinion that the difficulties we've experienced indicate that we shouldn't go to the UK*).

Regards to Grace and the little fellow.

Hi Alan,

We were just thinking about you guys. I know I am being dumb here but what exactly was the problem with Grace's visa? (*Ed: Reply sent*). We always believe that God does things for a reason and maybe he is trying to tell you peeps something?

Keep us informed and let us know if there is anything we can do.

Sorry we haven't been in touch recently. We have been away on holiday together to the Maldives and the week before we were all in Belgium.

Good to hear that the Visa fiasco is all sorted now finally, and that you will all be here in a couple of weeks or so. It will be a big culture shock for JP, I guess, but I'm sure it won't take him long to settle.

I also proposed to whilst in the Maldives and she said yes, so I guess a wedding will be on the way.

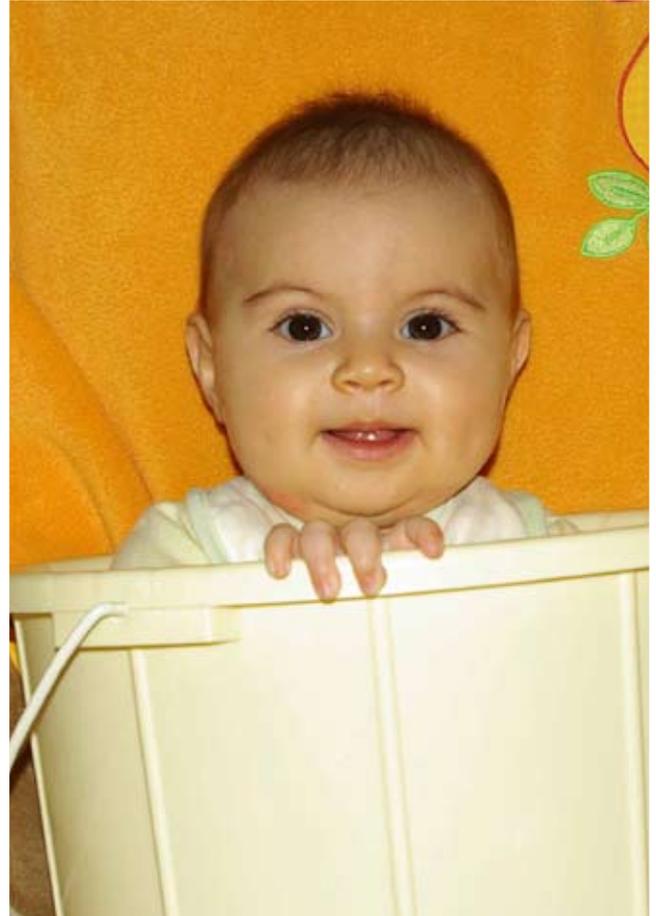
Anyway speak soon

Dear Alan & Grace,

We were so happy to hear your voice on Friday morning. I was in church at the time you called and couldn't answer the 'phone. Hannah and I have been going to church while Eun Sil has been staying home with the baby. She is still recovering and is taking her time before she goes out in public. This time the operation seemed to take more out of her than when Hannah was delivered. Anyway, Hannah is being a very good big sister and is trying to help us out. I have included some photographs of Noah and Hannah.

I understand that you are planning to go the U.K. soon. We have been reading your e-mails and newsletters. This is a great way to keep us informed about all that is happening. We pray that everything will go well when you travel to the U.K. (*Ed: See Stephen & Eun Sil's photographs on pages 12 to 17 of this edition*).

News from Stephen and Martha



Emily Catherine Whelan was born on 8 December 2007. These photographs were taken on 8 June 2008 when she was 6 months old! It would be nice if you can put them in the next newsletter. I'll let Martha be surprised!

Grace and I first met Stephen and Martha in Kuwait in 2001. Stephen and I worked together on a Kuwait Air Force base for some time until Grace and I left Kuwait, just before the Americans started bombing Baghdad to destruction. Stephen and Martha went off to work in Poland while Grace and I went to the UK for a few months, before returning to the Middle East, to Qatar, towards the end of 2003. Imagine our surprise when, soon afterwards, Stephen and Martha appeared in Doha too - where Stephen was working for the College of the North Atlantic (Qatar), one of the most important education centres in Qatar and the one where I was involved as being the training focal point/co-ordinator for Qatar Petroleum's Technician Preparation Programme. Small world! Like our Little Lad, Emily was born in Doha too. As regular readers will know, Emily is also the name given to my grand-daughter (Paul's daughter) in England.

Dear Friends

Empathy has become such a cliché in our lives today. What does empathy mean? Having its roots in Greek language empathy means “the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.” By means of empathy, the other person becomes a mirror of the self.

Can we truly empathize with another person? How can we feel the same emotions of the other human being, based on his experiences – good or bad, his cultural richness and constraints, his internal battles of self.

It is very easy to say, I empathize with you, but I am not only fooling him but also myself. I have my own personal demons to confront, I have my biases against some personalities or races; and I am not even aware of these mental processes going on in my psyche. How can I objectively block all this and enter the emotional domain of another with an open mind?

The general term for empathy is “putting yourself in the other person’s shoes” or the newer version is “walking a hundred miles in another’s shoes” I have to feel the pinch of a shoe several sizes smaller or the sheer entrapment of the footwear to truly understand the psyche behind the behaviour of the original wearer. Perhaps he has self-esteem issues, perhaps he has emotional baggage. Can I truly feel what he feels?

What if I was supposed to empathize with my autocratic boss or the very person who plays politics with me at the office. Am I magnanimous enough to do that? Can I sense his feelings of insecurity, his fear, his anxiety, his envy, his despondency? Can I see myself through his eyes? And if I were he wouldn’t I do the same?

Empathy is the fore-runner for emotionally intelligent people, because they have the strength to put their own emotions on hold to truly understand the other person. As Meryl Streep once quoted “The greatest gift of human beings is that we have the power of empathy”

How can we develop this ability, to be a master of interpersonal skills, to solve behaviour problems in others, to understand the needs and complaints of my customers and to improve relationships in our lives – both personal and professional? A few recommendations are:

1. Put your trust in the individual, to gain his trust you need to take the initiative.
2. Seek to understand and then be understood.
3. Look for the potential of the other person
4. Listen to him without being judgmental
5. Develop a sensitivity radar towards emotions

6. Practice - let your mind develop a pattern towards empathizing. Empathy is a learned behaviour.
7. Become an observer of body language
8. Learn about different cultures
9. Rid yourself of dogmatic notions and stereotyping
10. Instead of being self-fixated, be concerned with others
11. Find ways to reduce the ego
12. Practice principles of collective consciousness
13. Love people unconditionally

Zaufyshan Haseeb and The Intek Family

You can read the rest of their e-zine at URL: <http://www.intekworld.com/Newsletters/vol7/6/index.htm>

World Class Leaders?

The following information has been sent in by one of our readers. I cannot vouch for its accuracy but would not be surprised if it is correct.

Can you imagine working for a company that has a little more than 500 employees and has the following statistics?

- * 29 have been accused of spousal abuse
- * 7 have been arrested for fraud
- * 19 have been accused of writing bad cheques
- * 117 have directly / indirectly bankrupted at least 2 businesses
- * 3 have done time for assault
- * 71 cannot get a credit card due to bad credit
- * 14 have been arrested on drug-related charges
- * 8 have been arrested for shoplifting
- * 21 are currently defendants in lawsuits
- * 84 have been arrested for drunk driving in the last year.

Can you guess which organization this is? It’s the 535 members of the United States Congress. The same group that crank out hundreds of new laws each year designed to keep the rest of the people in line.

They don’t appear to have much in the way of empathy for the people they are supposed to represent.

I wonder what the statistics for the UK government are?

News from Stephen and Eun Sil



We were delighted to hear from more of our friends in Kuwait, whom we first met at the end of 2000. The photographs show Stephen with daughter, Hannah and new-born son, Noah.





Congratulations, Stephen and Eun Sil





We have received the following letter from Eun Sil:

Noah Jang Jacques was delivered by Caesarian on Saturday, May 24, 2008 at 11:20am weighing 3.130kg. He is healthy and as perfect as a little baby boy can be. I am fine too, but I need lots of rest. Fortunately, my mother in law is here to help out, and we have a maid come in five times a week to clean. Hannah is going through a roller coaster of emotions. She is acting up and acting out, but really, she is not that bad. My husband (Stephen) is spending a lot of time with her so she doesn't feel too neglected. I am sure she will soon start to help us with baby Noah.

A brother for Hannah





Ed: One of our (non-Muslim) readers sent in these comments about what I'd published about Islam by Dr. Daniel Shayesteh in the April 2008 edition. As a result, I had a look at the Holy Koran myself and publish various relevant extracts from it, with the official notes, underneath these comments. I have not included all the references by Dr. Daniel Shayesteh, due to lack of time and space. However, they may be found at the web site I've referred to below or a complete Holy Koran may be downloaded from http://www.islamway.com/SF/quran/data/The_Holy_Quran_English.pdf

I just want to quote the part which was written by Dr. Daniel Shayesteh, Islamisation of the West: "Husbands own their wives" (Q.53:2) (*Ed: I think this must be a mis-quote as Q.53:2 reads: Your friend (Muhammad) was not astray, nor was he deceived*). "Husbands beat their wives" (Q.4:34; 38:44) (Muhammad) "Do not treat your wives alike, no matter how eager you may be to do so (Q.4:129)."

I read once about Islam, for curiosity about their beliefs and doctrines, in the daily Gulf Times newspaper and I was amazed what I found out about their teachings, particularly what is quoted above, as it was stated that women will be treated equally as men. It's not true that once the man married the woman, the latter becomes a property of the man. Women have the same right with men and have the right to enjoy her freedom as long as it's not against the will of Allah. Also the wife should not be beaten by their husband instead the husband must love and take care of his wife. It was also stated that it's against to their doctrines of marrying their relatives just to protect and maintain their wealth within the family (though real practise based on our observation, this doesn't apply).

When I read those articles I realized that the doctrines and teachings of Muslims were very similar to those of Christian and now here's a former Muslim who wrote his confession about the injustice of this religion, it's confusing but if we look into it, Dr Daniel Shayesteh is sincere in what he has written.

The Authorized English translation of the Quran, by Dr. Rashad Khalifa
Courtesy of URL: <http://submission.org/quran/>

Do Not Beat Your Wife*

[4:34] The men are made responsible for the women, ** and GOD has endowed them with certain qualities, and made them the bread earners. The righteous women will cheerfully accept this arrangement, since it is GOD's commandment, and honour their husbands during their absence. If you experience rebellion from the women, you shall first talk to them, then (you may use negative incentives like) deserting them in bed, then you may (as a last alternative) beat them. If they obey you, you are not permitted to transgress against them. GOD is Most High, Supreme.

Marriage Arbitration

[4:35] If a couple fears separation, you shall appoint an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family; if they decide to reconcile, GOD will help them get together. GOD is Omniscient, Cognizant.

Notes:

*4:34 God prohibits wife-beating by using the best psychological approach. For example, if I don't want you to shop at Market X, I will ask you to shop at Market Y, then at Market Z, then, as a last resort, at Market X. This will effectively stop you from shopping at Market X, without insulting you. Similarly, God provides alternatives to wife-beating; reasoning with her first, then employing certain negative incentives. Remember that the theme of this sura is defending the women's rights and countering the prevalent oppression of women. Any interpretation of the verses of this sura must be in favour of the women. This sura's theme is "protection of women."

**4:34 This expression simply means that God is appointing the husband as "captain of the ship." Marriage is like a ship, and the captain runs it after due consultation with his officers. A believing wife readily accepts God's appointment, without mutiny.

*Ed: From my own reading of the Holy Koran, there is a verse in Sûrah 2:62 that reads: **Verily! Those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.** This is often ignored by Muslims, who prefer to quote Sûrah 3:85 which reads: **And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.** Any comments on this would be most welcome.*

To me, this just illustrates the difficulties that readers can have in understanding the true meaning of these verses.

Women's Inheritance Rights

[4:7] The men get a share of what the parents and the relatives leave behind. The women too shall get a share of what the parents and relatives leave behind. Whether it is a small or a large inheritance, (the women must get) a definite share.

[4:8] During distribution of the inheritances, if relatives, orphans, and needy persons are present, you shall give them therefrom, and treat them kindly.

[4:9] Those who are concerned about their own children, in case they leave them behind, shall observe GOD and be equitable.

[4:10] Those who consume the orphans' properties unjustly, eat fire into their bellies, and will suffer in Hell.

If No Will Is Left*

[4:11] GOD decrees a will for the benefit of your children; the male gets twice the share of the female*. If the inheritors are only women, more than two, they get two-thirds of what is bequeathed. If only one daughter is left, she gets one-half. The parents of the deceased get one-sixth of the inheritance each, if the deceased has left any children. If he left no children, and his parents are the only inheritors, the mother gets one-third. If he has siblings, then the mother gets one-sixth. All this, after fulfilling any will the deceased has left, and after paying off all debts. When it comes to your parents and your children, you do not know which of them is really the best to you and the most beneficial. This is GOD's law. GOD is Omniscient, Most Wise.

Notes:

*4:11 Generally, the son is responsible for a family, while the daughter is taken care of by a husband. However, the Quran recommends in 2:180 that a will shall be left to conform with the specific circumstances of the deceased. For example, if the son is rich and the daughter is poor, one may leave a will giving the daughter everything, or twice as much as the son.

Inheritance For the Spouses

[4:12] You get half of what your wives leave behind, if they had no children. If they had children, you get one-fourth of what they leave. All this, after fulfilling any will they had left, and after paying off all debts. They get one-fourth of what you leave behind, if you had no children. If you had children, they get one-eighth of what you bequeath. All this, after fulfilling any will you had left, and after paying off all debts. If the deceased man or woman was a loner, and leaves two siblings, male or female, each of them gets one-sixth of the inheritance. If there are more siblings, then they equally share one-third of the inheritance. All this, after fulfilling any will, and after paying off all debts, so that no one is hurt. This is a will decreed by GOD. GOD is Omniscient, Clement.

Polygamy Discouraged*

[4:129] You can never be equitable in dealing with more than one wife, no matter how hard you try. Therefore, do not be so biased as to leave one of them hanging (neither enjoying marriage, nor left to marry someone else). If you correct this situation and maintain righteousness, GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

Notes:

Polygamy was a way of life until the Quran was revealed 1400 years ago. When the earth was young and under-populated, polygamy was one way of populating it and bringing in the human beings needed to carry out God's plan.

By the time the Quran was revealed, the world had been sufficiently populated, and the Quran put down the first limitations against polygamy. Polygamy is permitted in the Quran, but under strictly observed circumstances. Any abuse of this divine permission incurs severe retribution. Thus, although polygamy is permitted by God, it behooves us to examine our circumstances carefully before saying that a particular polygamous relationship is permissible.

Our perfect example here is the prophet Muhammad. He was married to one wife, Khadijah, until she died. He had all his children, except one, from Khadijah. Thus, she and her children enjoyed the Prophet's full attention for as long as she was married to him; twenty-five years. For all practical purposes, Muhammad had one wife - from the age of 25 to 50. During the remaining 13 years of his life, he married the aged widows of his friends who left many children. The children needed a complete home, with a fatherly figure, and the Prophet provided that. Providing a fatherly figure for orphans is the only specific circumstance in support of polygamy mentioned in the Quran (4:3).

Farewell to Helen



and to our family



It was a rather sad day on 12 June, our original day for flying to the UK, when we said farewell to Helen, who has lived with us for four months. It will take Helen three days of travelling to get to her home in Mindanao, where she will be reunited with her husband and other children before having another baby. We also had a visit from mum and dad and Daryl who came to see us from Pangasinan. Now our travelling date has been changed, I dare say we will have another party!

and friends, Al and Josie



all in different forms of transport



Mum, Dad and Daryl travelled by bus, then motor-trike to their home near Bani, Pangasinan.

Al and Josie travelled to Barretto by motor-trike, then jeepney to Olongapo, then bus and motor-trike to Agno, in Pangasinan.

Helen travelled by jeepney to Olongapo, then bus to Manila, then ship to Mindanao - after that, who knows?

The view into the jeepney, *right*, shows Helen with her big red bag.



and to Little Lad's Great Grandad

Four generations of Navelgas family





On 26 June, we visited the home of Grace's Grandfather, Leopoldo Navelgas Snr. in Pangasinan. Grandad is now aged in his 90's and still going quite well.

Grace's father is Leopoldo Navelgas Jr. When I met Grace, she was Grace Avelino (her mother's maiden name) Navelgas. Her name is now Grace Navelgas Cook. The middle name in the Philippines is always that of the maiden name of the mother until marriage (for females), after which the middle name becomes the former family (i.e. maiden) name.

Our Little Lad's full name is John Paul Alan Navelgas Cook, so continuing the Navelgas family name.

and friends, Dado and Victoria





On 8 June, we visited Dado and Victoria and their family in Mатаin, not far from our home. I first met Dado in 1997 when I worked in Manila. Dado was one of my teaching colleagues, and is still working for the same maritime training centre.



Grace's Visa Saga!

The following is more of a summary of events, as it would take several pages to re-count everything that happened.

On 14 May, Grace was issued with her visa and her passport returned safely to us. We were delighted, of course. After a few days, I got an uncomfortable feeling about it and called one of our acquaintances who is the Honorary British Consul near where we live. After some discussion with him, I scanned the visa and e-mailed it to him, whereupon he sent an e-mail to the British Embassy asking for clarification.

On 29 May (having already booked out flights to the UK for 12 June), I received the following (edited) e-mail from the British Embassy:

I write in respect of your email to the Honorary Consul regarding your above mentioned wife. I have reviewed the application in light of your representations. Mrs Cook's Entry Clearance should have been endorsed as SETTLEMENT:SPOUSE (KOL REQ), given the length of your marriage and cohabitation outside the UK, in accordance with paragraph 281(i)(b). The error in endorsement was due to an administrative oversight. In light of above, could you please forward Mrs Cook's passport for the appropriate endorsement on her passport. My apologies for the inconvenience this might have caused.

Grace had been issued with the WRONG visa! They had not taken into consideration that we have been married more than the required 4 years that entitles her to a settlement visa.

I returned the passport to the British Embassy for correction. I sent with it a pre-paid pouch so that all they had to do after correcting the visa, was to put the documents inside the pouch and give it to the courier who would deliver it to us. We received confirmation that the visa had been corrected on 6 June with an e-mail that said that Grace's passport should be on it's way to us (Note: **should** - they didn't actually know!).

On Monday (9th), I sent them an e-mail asking them to confirm that it really was on it's way to us and to speed things up if at all possible. On Tuesday (10th) I received an e-mail saying they had cancelled delivery by the courier and could Grace collect it from the Embassy on the following day:

Thank you for your further e-mail. Your wife's passport and papers are still with us, supposed to be for despatched via LBC courier (as per above 9th) - I have referred this and sending your wife's passport thru courier has been cancelled. She may now come and collect it here personally.

At first we thought this may be possible, but after some reflection we realised it just wasn't practical - remember that this trip to the Embassy in Manila would have been on the day before our flight, so I sent another e-mail to the Embassy asking them to send it by courier as previously arranged. We then re-booked our flights for 1 July (re-booking fee \$US90).

On Wednesday (11th), I received the following e-mail: *We have already despatched the passport of your wife today via LBC with Tracking No. 18007911160. For your information, we had problems on our telephone system yesterday morning so it was impossible for us to receive incoming calls and make outgoing calls.*

Not only was this tracking number incorrect, but it was an outright lie. They had NOT dispatched the passport at all.

On Friday (13th) I received the following e-mail: *Thanks for the correction. The tracking number was 181007911170.* This too was incorrect - it was the tracking number I'd been issued with when I had sent the passport to them!

We then received a telephone call saying they'd dispatched the passport to us. It was going to the LBC office in Alaminos. When I told them that this was the incorrect office (a huge distance from our home), it turned out that they had sent it to the WRONG address! Talk about running round like headless chicken! I could hear (in Tagalog) the panic they were in. Eventually, they contacted the courier and managed to get the documents re-addressed and re-directed.

We received Grace's passport with the correct visa on Saturday 14 June - Two days after we were supposed to have left here and 9 days after they'd said they'd completed the correction to Grace's visa and sent it. 9 days to pick up the documents, put them in the pouch provided and give it to the courier - that's Filipino efficiency for you. It seems incredible to me that, despite 29 e-mails, 3 telephone calls and 4 text messages, (and the might of the British Embassy! - run by Filipinos - even the Entry Clearance Officer handling our case was a Filipina) we had to wait all this time for Grace's passport to be returned. Total incompetence - getting the visa wrong in the first place shows how incompetent they are - the rest of this nightmare was just unbelievable. A Filipina friend, married to a Norwegian man, told us that the Filipino staff in the Norwegian Embassy are also stupid and incompetent. No one complains for fear that doing so may affect their visa applications.

Full Circle!

Just before we leave the Philippines, heading for a new home in Stoke-on-Trent, I was saying to Grace, it was in Stoke-on-Trent where all my troubles began!

It must have started in 1994, maybe 1995 when I happened to stay in Stoke-on-Trent for a few days. Walking around one day I bought a local newspaper for something to read and that was the beginning of it all.

Wading through its yellow coloured pages, I came across a full-page advertisement containing details of a special offer whereby the publisher would publish your personal ad all over the world for a very reasonable fee. Being on my own and with nothing else to do, I duly completed the form and sent it off - and promptly forgot about it.

Returning to my very peaceful home overlooking the sea, in Kent, I returned to my work and routine and then I started to receive a trickle, then a deluge, of correspondence from all over the world. Single girls looking for foreign husbands! Most were from the Philippines. Girls of every shape, size and age imaginable. Tall ones, short ones, fat ones and skinny ones. Educated and uneducated. Young and old. Beautiful and pangit! Well over a hundred of them.

My computer, word-processor and printer were working overtime. Sacks of mail raised the postman's eyes and lowered his back, and the post office nearly ran out of stamps as I bought in bulk. The sleepy neighbourhood almost woke from its torpid stupor due to the sound of my clattering mail box as yet another delivery crashed through the door at 7 o'clock every morning.

Eventually, the flood reduced back to a trickle and I selected three girls to write to on a regular basis. This soon became two and eventually one. In January 1996 I visited the Philippines for three weeks, staying in an apartment hotel in Manila. I met the girl I'd been writing to, and her family, and even rented a car to drive to the southern tip of Luzon (Irosin) to meet even more family members. What an adventure! Despite being widely travelled, I'd never been anywhere like the Philippines! (and still haven't - mercifully). Anyway, we all got on well and the girl and I continued to write to each other.

In England, I had a think about the future and decided I was due for a change of scene. In the *Overseas Jobs Express* paper, I read about a young man who went to teach English in Colombia. That decided me. I'd go back to school and get job insurance! I'd become

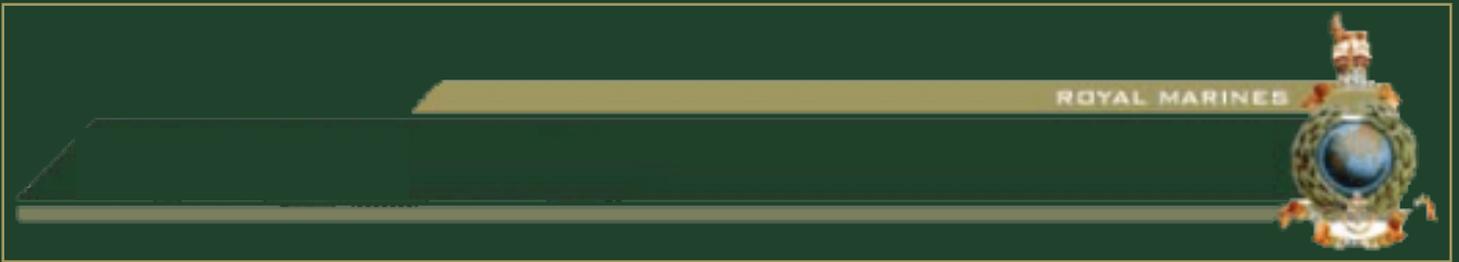
qualified as an English language teacher too. Just as he had. Not that I had any thoughts on going to Colombia - but the idea seemed a good one. Little did I know what I was letting myself in for.

I enrolled at *inLingua* in Cheltenham and found out just why everyone said it was a hard. I lived in my caravan and cycled to the college every day and lived on Marks and Spencer pre-packaged food. Working from 5:00am until 11:00pm every day I somehow managed to get through all the work. The work wasn't difficult - there was just so much of it! During the second week, I became the first of our group to crack. I managed to get my head together again and carried on while everyone else cracked in the third week. At the end of the third week I had to make a dash to Sussex as my father was seriously ill. He rallied and I returned to Cheltenham. Early on Friday morning of the fourth week, I got a call from my mother saying I'd better get back home fast. Leaving my caravan on the site, I flew my car back to Haywards Heath. My father came out of a near coma just before I walked into his room and we were able to say goodbye to each other before he passed away on the evening of Friday 13 September 1996.

I stayed with my mother for a week - until the funeral had passed, before returning to Cheltenham to collect my caravan. The managers of the site were so helpful and so kind to me. So were the folks at the college.

I returned to complete the course a month after my abrupt departure - with a new group of people to get to know and work with. I'd been doing some preparatory work during the intervening time and this proved helpful to me. The end of the course eventually came, the adjudicators had their say and I passed. What a great feeling that was - and a relief. After all the time, effort and problems, I'd made it.

On 24 February 1997, I landed in the Philippines once more - this time to stay - at least for a time. I'd resigned my comfortable, well paid job, got rid of my home and most of my possessions and scrapped my car. Really burnt my boats. It had been a toss-up whether to go to Thailand or the Philippines. I'd even got a Thai visa. But I got the 'plane to the Philippines. After 4 months in Manila I got a job and worked hard for eight months before moving to the Subic area to take another job. After 20 months, I left that job, had a break, then found another job. While working on that contract, in mid-June 2000, eight years ago, I met Grace - and my troubles began! But I wouldn't want be without her (or JP).



Marine Dale Gostick killed in Afghanistan



It is with deep sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Marine Dale Gostick, of 3 Troop Armoured Support Company, Royal Marines, in Afghanistan on Sunday 25 May 2008

Marine Dale Gostick of the Royal Marines was serving as a Viking operator in 3rd Troop of the Armoured Support Company, Royal Marines, when he was killed in action at the Sangin crossing of the Helmand River, southern Helmand province, Afghanistan. His troop were returning to their Forward Operating Base, after providing essential support to 2 PARA Battle Group, when the Viking he was driving struck a suspected mine. Sadly, despite the best efforts of the medical team on site, Marine Gostick was pronounced dead at the scene. His death has come as an incredible shock to his friends and colleagues, and he will be deeply missed by his comrades in the Armoured Support Company and the wider Royal Marines. Another two Royal Marines were also injured in the blast and are still receiving medical treatment.

SAS chief resigns over lack of kit



A FORMER head of the SAS has quit the army after criticising the government for risking soldiers' lives by failing to fund troops and equipment.

Brigadier Ed Butler, one of Britain's most experienced and decorated special forces soldiers, is the most senior of three key commanders to have resigned in the past year amid widespread anger over lack of funding.

News of his resignation comes in the same week that General Sir Richard Dannatt, head of the army, called for better treatment for the forces and more money to be spent on defence.

In a statement issued through the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Butler said he was leaving for "a number of factors and reasons" and singled out difficulties faced by service personnel.

He praised the "extraordinarily brave men and women" who repeatedly did their job well in the face of "constraints and restraints". He said the country owed them "a huge debt of gratitude".

The MoD said it was "not a protest vote". But close friends said Butler was disappointed that the government put soldiers' lives at risk by failing to pay for sufficient troops and equipment.

"He was very frustrated at the cuts going on in the army at present," one close associate said. "Sadly, many of the concerns held by senior officers have not been resolved and, across the armed forces, there are a lot of officers and soldiers who are not happy."

Butler, 48, was widely expected to become the next director of special forces, friends said.

He led the first British deployment to southern Afghanistan in 2006 and said in his statement that his decision to quit

came "after a great deal of discussion and deliberation over the last six months".

Six months ago the board of inquiry into the death of Captain Jim Philippon, the first British soldier to die in action in Helmand province, cited Butler's criticism of the failure to provide troops and kit and blamed "political machinations" for his death.

Butler was highly critical of John Reid, then defence secretary, for keeping troop numbers low and of the failure of the Treasury under Gordon Brown to fund equipment.

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Williams MC, another commanding officer of the SAS, resigned last July after being criticised by senior officers for spending too much time on the front line with his men.

He was followed in November by Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Tootal, commanding officer of third battalion, the Parachute Regiment.

Butler's special forces career during the 1991 Gulf war, in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan had him marked down for great things.

He is the grandson of Richard "Rab" Butler, the former Tory foreign secretary and chancellor.

He was mentioned in dispatches in Northern Ireland, awarded the Distinguished Service Order twice, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his time in Helmand.

He is currently the commander of Joint Task Force Headquarters which is based in the UK and contains a strong special forces element.

(Courtesy of URL: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article4087644.ece>)

Britain's medical poker game

By Melanie Phillips

Daily Mail, 2 June 2008

To the Labour Party, the National Health Service is the talismanic proof of its own moral superiority.

Time and again, Labour brandishes its undying commitment to the NHS as the embodiment of its social conscience, and vilifies anyone who suggests that a different system of health care might be better as a heartless brute who would force the sick to choose between death and bankruptcy.

Well, now we can see quite what odious hypocrisy that is. For in the cause of supporting the NHS principle of equal treatment for all, the Government is actually ordering the withdrawal of treatment from desperately sick and dying people as an act of ideological spite.

A woman dying of cancer was denied NHS treatment in her final months — because she had paid privately for a drug which offered her the chance of living longer, but which the NHS had refused to provide.

When she decided to use her savings to pay for this drug, the NHS withdrew her treatment, including her chemotherapy.

This is by no means a one-off case. Six other cancer patients are taking legal action against the NHS after their own treatment was cut off or a threat was made to do so because they too paid for life-prolonging drugs.

This is simply obscene. It is hard to imagine anything more vicious than stopping, or threatening to stop, the treatment of seriously ill people simply because they have the audacity to want to improve their chances of staying alive.

These are people who, on top of the suffering caused by their illness, are having to raid their own savings to pay for treatment that the NHS is failing to provide.

To say to such people that if they pay for a bit of their treatment they will have to pay for all of it is quite simply blackmail.

To force them into a situation where, at a time when they need most support, they have to endure the worry of massive bills imposed upon them as an act of gratuitous punishment is really intolerable.

It is profoundly unethical for doctors to stop treatment in such circumstances. Hippocrates, who gave his name to the doctors' oath of care for their patients, must be spinning in his grave.

It is almost certainly unlawful — and if it isn't, it damn well should be. The founding principle of the NHS is equal care for all, not care that is conditional provided patients don't do something of which the government disapproves.

But the Health Secretary Alan Johnson has rewritten the founding principle of the NHS to be that someone is either an NHS or a private patient.

Accordingly, last year he ordered NHS trusts to refuse to allow patients to pay for additional medicines. This was to stop a 'two-tier service', with people receiving top-up drugs being treated on the same ward as those getting only standard NHS medicines.

What next — people with health insurance being refused NHS treatment? Will patients be turfed out of hospital if their relatives bring in 'top-up' food for them?

Will children be banned from state schools if their parents pay for private tutors for them (if that rule were applied, the children of half the Government would surely be banned).

Just who does Mr Johnson think will be hurt by patients buying additional drugs? The Left has always opposed private medicine on the grounds that it takes doctors away from the NHS, thus reducing the amount of treatment for everyone else.

But if a patient buys extra drugs, that won't deprive a single person of any treatment.

Of course that's not the point at all, is it, and never has been. The Government isn't concerned about the quality of treatment for those patients who are not buying top-up drugs; indeed, it's not concerned about the quality of treatment for anyone. Punishing

No, what drives it instead is the obsessive determination that if everyone can't have something, then no one should have it.

It really would rather that people were dead than that they might have something that someone else didn't have. This is the equality of the graveyard.

Threatening people with dire consequences if they spend their own money on something of which ministers disapprove isn't fairness or justice. It is coercion, and it is inimical to a free society.

Moreover, the Government is punishing people for trying to mitigate the effects of its own failure towards them.

After all, the only reason this has arisen is that the NHS is failing to provide patients with drugs that are available and might help them. Britain has some of the worst cancer survival rates in Europe, and as some doctors privately acknowledge, one reason is that NHS patients are prevented from buying the most effective drugs.

And this is surely the deeper point of this lamentable business. The founding myth of the NHS, that it can treat

everyone equally all the time, now stands exposed for the nonsense that it always was.

The combination of galloping advances in medical science, unlimited demand and a finite pot of funds makes that commitment demonstrably impossible.

A state-run, top-down system makes some kind of rationing absolutely inescapable. But with new treatments exploding, a society which believes in the right of consumer choice makes such rationing decisions intolerable.

The inevitable consequence is that, one way or another, people will start paying for those treatments that the NHS denies them. So those who have the money are increasingly dipping into their savings to pay for surgery or drugs.

This is indeed a two-tier health service — for people who pay once for medical care through their taxes and National Insurance, and then again for the treatment that the state refuses to provide.

The real issue is the one that at present no political party will acknowledge. This is that the NHS is bust as a model of medical care. It needs to be replaced by schemes which allow people to pay for treatments and care that they cannot presently receive.

There are various ways of doing this. European social insurance systems, under which people buy different types of health schemes, raise survival rates and standards for all — including those who can't afford to pay the premiums but who nevertheless enjoy a guaranteed standard of care higher than anything they can get in Britain.

The Government refuses to consider this for two reasons. First, the NHS is too valuable a stick with which to beat up the Opposition. And second, given the wreckage of Labour's core beliefs, it's the one thing that gives them the illusion that they are still pursuing a moral project.

But in fact, as we can now all too graphically see, it is anything but moral.

When the NHS was founded in 1948, some warned then that state control of medical care would destroy medical ethics. They were vilified as money-grabbing reactionaries.

But surely even they could not have foreseen that the NHS would end up forcing terminally ill patients to play double or quits in some diabolical game of medical poker — with the stake being their life.

How dare they do this to people? Let us never again hear that social conscience is a Labour monopoly. This is a Government that is blackmailing the dying. Can there be a greater betrayal of progressive ideals?

Courtesy of Melanie Phillips at URL: <http://www.melaniephillips.com/articles-new/?p=589>

Big Brother is Watching - and Listening and Reading!

Ministers are on a collision course with civil liberties groups after it emerged they were to consider plans for a national database.

Details of every phone call and email sent in the UK would be held. The plans, which are at a very early stage, are being considered for inclusion in the draft Communications Bill to be published later this year, the Home Office confirmed.

However, they are likely to provoke outrage from data protection and civil liberty campaigners and raise objections to the rise of a "Big Brother" state.

Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman Chris Huhne led the criticism saying: "This is an Orwellian step too far. Ministers have taken leave of their senses if they think that this proposal is compatible with a free country and a free people." He added: "Given the appalling track record of data loss, this state is simply not to be trusted with such private information."

Meanwhile, it has emerged confidential health records of 38,650 patients on the Isle of Wight have gone missing after a computer back-up tape was lost by a courier firm. Sandown Health Centre sent its computer records to a specialist company to carry out checks on its software but the tape failed to arrive back when sent by courier firm City Link. A Home Office spokesman said retaining communications information is essential for protecting national security. He also emphasised powers to hold information were subject to strict safeguards. He said: "Communications data - the who, how, when and where of a communication but not the what (content) of the communication - is a crucial tool for protecting national security, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the public.

"The Communications Data Bill will help ensure that crucial capabilities in the use of communications data for counter-terrorism and investigation of crime continue to be available. "These powers will continue to be subject to strict safeguards to ensure the right balance between privacy and protecting the public. "We need to make changes to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) to ensure that public authorities can continue to obtain and have access to communications data essential for counter-terrorism and investigation of crime purposes. "We will also use this legislation to transpose into UK law the EU Directive 2006/24/EC on the retention of communications data - which requires the retention of internet protocol traffic data by communications service providers."

The Government has been embarrassed by a string of data protection failures in recent months including the loss of a CD carrying the personal details of every child benefit claimant.

Courtesy of URL: <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/itm/20080520/tuk-giant-uk-database-considered-dba1618.html>



Adventure is when the talking, reading and planning stop and the action starts.

This month I'm concentrating on *Global Travel & Adventure*, something that most of our readers are familiar with.

I have not made it a travel shop article. It has been written to give you *ideas* for your travels and connect you to the early pioneers of global travel and adventure as well as recent adventurers.

Some of the links are to articles of historical interest, from which we can see just how much our world has changed and make direct comparisons with the world of today. There are also some fascinating travel books available on the internet that you can spend many happy hours reading.



Boots 'n All is a traveller's resource web site where you can read about other travellers adventures and even book flights and holidays on line. You can also post your own stories and join in the on line forums.

You might be wondering what Boots n All.com means (nothing to do with making or selling boots) and where the name came from. Well...

The Trip

Perhaps not surprisingly, around drinks in an Aussie pub in 1994 a plan originated, leading to four lads (3 Aussies and one rotund Yank) going on a trip to the European Football Championships in May '96. As these 4 excited boys gathered in Chicago in preparation for the trip, they discussed in depth the proper naming of this journey.

The Name

Names such as "Footy 96", "Euro 96" and other unattractive terms were tossed around. But, as they prepared for the trip, a search for the ultimate boot began. A boot that could be worn on a hike up Kilimanjaro or laced up for a game of footy on the Commons, but was also presentable enough for a night on the town. As this search intensified, so did the name for the trip. Somehow "Boots n All" (pronounced "boots 'n' all") was decided on.

Boots n All was born.

Boots n All: The Definition

"Boots" meaning the search for the ultimate Boot.

"nAll" for everything else that independent travel is and should be to an individual.

What Happened Next?

After having both done extensive travel through Europe and

Asia, Chris Heidrich and Sean Keener, 2 of the original 4, met back in Chicago in June '97 for some travel around the States. The original Code of Conduct was discussed and written on a hike in Yellowstone National Park.

The 2 travellers' idea was to share their love of travel and somehow help independent travellers connect with each other. The dream stayed with them even after they went their separate ways again.

Chris and Sean met back in Chicago again in December '98 and discussed how "fun" it would be to put up a web site about Boots n All. On March 1, 1999, they threw up a basic web site, sharing their "Code of Conduct" and a way for travellers to share current travel information. People applied in such a rush to be part of this network of online, open-minded travellers, that the lads knew they were on to something. Online Travel Guides were quickly published, and the site grew into its current state and size, as a resource for independent travellers.

Sean and Chris continue to receive hundreds of e-mails from people wanting to write for and be part of the site. Since then, their travels and Boots n All.com have put Sean and Chris in touch with thousands of people, 3 of who, Nick O'Neill and Jessica Spiegel, and Donovan Pacholl are now members of the Boots n All staff. If you want to put faces to names here are the staff profiles.

And the rest of the Boots n All story?

It is still being written today.

So, that's it. The Boots n All Story. Think you might like to become a member of this community of travellers?

Travels with Samantha

by Philip Greenspun

I first read *Travels with Samantha* soon after it appeared on the internet in 1993. I downloaded and printed every chapter and thoroughly enjoyed the read. In those days there were no accompanying photographs, but I see that there are some in the current edition.

Travels with Samantha won a **Best of the Web '94** award.

I have included Chapter One in this magazine - just to get you started. There is also a button that links you to the rest of the book so you can continue reading it. I hope you enjoy it. Who is Samantha? I'll leave that for you to find out.

"This book is about the summer I spent seeing North America, meeting North Americans, and trying to figure out how people live," writes Greenspun after losing his companion. You'll come face to face with examples of the stunning ethnic, scenic, and cultural richness of the continent.

Meet both sides of the language war in Montreal, bored youths in the Midwest, North Dakota Harley riders, struggling single mothers in the Yukon, and free spirits in Alaska. Join Greenspun as he travels up the spine of the Rocky Mountains into Canada and then up the Alaska Highway. Splash down in a float plane and spend a week with 20 bears.

Work your way through the Inside Passage on the Alaska Marine Highway, and get inside a salmon processing factory. See if Greenspun survives touring Vancouver, Vancouver Island, and the Pacific Northwest with old friends and new. Ask about polygamy in Salt Lake City, mountain bike the Slickrock Trail, and learn how to live with AIDS in Utah. Watch the waters recede from the Great Flood of '93 in St. Louis. Follow Greenspun back to Boston and MIT.

Chapter I: White fur, red blood

It started with a nosebleed: red blood dripping from a pink nose onto the floor, leaving the white fur unstained. George was a 65 lb. Samoyed dog, 7 years old, and the very picture of Stoic good health. I brought him to my local veterinarian, who said, "I can't find anything wrong with him. He is only bleeding from one nostril so he probably just has a piece of grass stuck in his nose. Wait three days and, if he is still bleeding, take him down to Angell Memorial where they can look inside his nose. They have CAT scanners, ultrasound, and everything else you'd find at a hospital for humans."

George seemed sluggish and it made me uneasy. I drove straight to Angell Memorial Animal Hospital, the best in Boston, where Dr. Daniel Stobie was able to see him after 30 minutes. Dr. Stobie felt around George's undercarriage and said, "I don't like the feel of his abdomen; he could



have a serious problem." His clinical and detached tone chilled me. He removed George's collar and leash and handed it to me, putting a plastic ID collar around the dog's neck instead. I had a fleeting sinking feeling that this would be all of George that would come out of the hospital. It was Thursday afternoon.

After a nervous, nearly sleepless Thursday night, Friday was a day of nail-biting and bad news. Testing seemed to me to proceed at a snail's pace, and I beseeched Dr. Stobie to hurry up with the diagnostic tests so that George could be treated. Somewhat annoyed with my impatience, he called me several times, each time deepening my gloom. By late Friday, he announced that George was in disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), a condition induced by various disorders, including heat stroke, cancer, and infection. Small clots form inside the dog at a rapid pace so that the blood's clotting factors are used up. Thus, the thinned blood can pour out of the dog's nose, though usually not from just one nostril. Dr. Stobie said that 75% of the dogs in DIC die and that the remaining 25% often suffer permanent organ damage. X-rays revealed an enlarged liver and spleen, but not the underlying source of George's DIC and were therefore useless for treatment.

"George probably has cancer. There isn't anything we can do for him at the moment other than give him an IV with plasma and fluids to bring him out of DIC." Dr. Stobie didn't sound as though he had much hope.

Visiting hours in the intensive care unit (ICU) are brief, so I rushed down to Angell to take full advantage of them. Bruce and Neil, old friends from work and college, accompanied me. Seeing George in intensive care was heartbreaking. The place was about as nice as could be expected, but it killed me to see animals suffering. Hospitals for humans never bothered me as much, perhaps because the patients can at least comprehend their plight. George was in a cage about 4' x 6', lying in a sedated fog. He was happy to see us and struggled to get to his feet.

I cried to see him brought so low and in such a cold place. Neil and Bruce felt awkward seeing me break down. I've never been the politically correct, emotionally sensitive Cambridge Man. I probably hadn't cried in 15 years. George was always tough, aloof, and very much his own dog. He'd jump into bed with me, but would eventually retire to his private corner. This is the dog who hit a trip wire in Harvard Yard while running at a full 30 miles/hour, sailed and tumbled 20 feet through the air, landed on his head, and kept running without yelping. Nothing in my seven years with George prepared me to see him in such a state.

After holding his head and crying into his neck fur for 15 minutes, I let Neil and Bruce get closer to George and looked around the ICU, which was a good recipe for heartache. A magnificent black Newfoundland slept in the adjacent cage. A little farther was a sweet-looking Golden Retriever panting in a closed cell with clear plastic doors so that he could breathe oxygen-enriched air. I felt sorriest for him, little imagining that my own baby would be in his place in two days.

We were kicked out at 7:00 PM and Bruce followed me home. Bruce and I moved furniture and did some carpentry. George was never out of our minds, but I stopped crying. After Bruce left, I called my brother Harry, an anaesthesiologist in Baltimore, who'd lived with me and George one summer and well understood the potential tragedy.

Harry explained DIC a little more thoroughly - it was definitely something you didn't want to have - and tried to give me a lot of medical advice. He floated the idea that there might be better animal hospitals for canine cancer. It occurred to me that everyone in our family is obsessed with the idea of getting the right specialist. There is no medical problem so serious that it cannot be cured by the genius that cured some cousin's brother-in-law ("everyone said he was going to die and look at him now, five years after he saw that wonderful Dr. Smith"). After I plaintively said, "Harry, I'm calling you as a brother, not a doctor," he was quite sympathetic.

Then I called Chicca, my Italian girlfriend, the only woman I'd ever dated who'd been introduced to me by George. Meeting women with a Samoyed by one's side is like shooting fish in a barrel, but I'd never followed up any of the casual conversations until Chicca interrupted her tour of the U.S. to pet the "poppy." George had good taste, for Chicca probably loved me as much as any woman could. She wanted to jump on the next plane, but I restrained her. "You can't leave school until July and, besides, my parents will be here next week. My local friends can pull me through until Mom and Dad arrive."

I don't remember getting into bed, but I do remember an overwhelming loneliness. I stared up through my bedroom skylight at the empty sky and cried until I fell asleep at about 4:00 AM. Despite my predisposition to sloth, I woke at 8:00 AM without an alarm and wasn't tired. I moved some more



heavy things and arrived at Angell Memorial at 11:30 sharp for the only visiting hour on Saturday. Hardly anyone was there, and the quiet was reassuring.

Before I entered the ICU, I could see George through the window sitting up in his cage. He greeted me wildly and seemed to have his energy and health fully restored. The IV plasma had had a miraculous effect on George, and I began to hope. I held him for 30 minutes, and then Rebecca came by.

Rebecca had dumped me a year before. "I'm going to be on CSPAN this weekend," I had said on the phone. "Not only do I not want to see you on television, I don't want to see you in person anymore" was how she had closed the door on our three years together. I had it coming to me, but I would have been mired in despair if not for George's companionship.

Rebecca had a difficult time believing that George was in immediate danger and spoke of breeding him once he'd recovered so that his unique personality would be preserved. She'd never liked dogs and still didn't like them in general, but had grown powerfully attached to George. She was warm with George, but a bit cold and almost bitter with me. We parted from George in a reasonably optimistic mood. He exhibited no signs of illness or depression, and it seemed that he'd be one of the lucky 25%.

Bruce and Henry, my partners in an engineering consulting business, spent Saturday afternoon with me. I wrote some software, relying on my natural obsessive characteristics to take my mind off George. Saturday afternoon, Dr. Stobie gave me some bad news: an ultrasound-guided hunt through George's interior revealed malignant-looking bone marrow cells. However, he promised me no definitive verdict until Monday when a senior pathologist could look at the cells.

Neil, Melissa, and Mara came over in the evening, and we stayed up until 5:15 AM looking at photographs, moving heavy things, talking, watching a movie, listening to Arthur Grumiaux (the Belgian violinist) records, and relaxing on the living room couch. When I met Neil in 1982, just after we graduated from MIT, he struck me as the warmest, sweetest, most sympathetic person I'd ever met. We've

been friends ever since, and he is one of the few men that I really feel comfortable touching; sitting close on my couch (hemmed in by the women) was the best time that I had that weekend.

I awoke in a nervous state at 9 on Sunday morning and paced through the hours until 11:30 visiting time. Henry and Bruce met me at the hospital, and we found George in the Golden Retriever's oxygen cage. He looked weak and sick, but when he saw me, he pressed his face against the glass so hard that his features were distorted, like a 5-year-old child smushing his nose and lips against a window. It would have been funny if George had done it while healthy. Now he whimpered and cried, probably from a combination of loneliness and pain. Dr. Stobie had gone on vacation and Dr. Brenda Griffin came by to take his place. She seemed just as capable, but was infinitely warmer and more sympathetic ("call me Brenda").

Without anyone saying anything, Brenda sensed that George was not just a backyard dog to be played with when work and family responsibilities allowed, but rather a best friend, constant companion, and partner in life. She let George out of the cage, and I held him on the floor trying in vain not to cry. I could have cried freely alone, in front of old friends, or in front of someone who wouldn't have cared, but it seemed cruel to burden Brenda.

George was short of breath from being outside the oxygen cage, but when we put him back in he seemed agitated about being separated from me. We had to leave before the end of visiting hours to keep him from tiring himself. I wasn't sorry to leave anyway; it was killing me to see him in that state. Out in the hallway, Brenda was in the middle of assuring us that she was doing everything possible when three fraternity boys came rushing in to check on the progress of their cat. They accosted Brenda, who had nothing to do with their case, and demanded to know how much they would be charged.

Once out of the hospital, I felt free to collapse. Henry noted my despair and kindly drove me in my car back to Cambridge. "Those guys were archetypical fraternity jerks," Henry fumed. Only his proper Hong Kong upbringing had kept him from exploding on the spot. This conversation drew my own attitudes about George and money into sharp focus. I realized how easy it would be to give up everything material if it would save George. Comparing the pain of losing money when one of my start-up companies went belly-up to the pain of losing Rebecca, I knew that there were many things I loved more than money. However, losing George hammered home the utter impotence of money under the most trying circumstances.

We all sat down to brunch in Harvard Square and tried to remember all the good times we'd had with George. Bruce and Henry chuckled that, even in his last days, George was irresistible to beautiful women (Brenda had expressive green eyes set in fine soft features, framed by long blond

hair). Wherever I went, women would stop me so they could pet George, unless I was running fast or in New York City, where people are afraid of their own shadows. "How old is he?", "What's his name?", and "What kind of dog is he?" Everyone would ask. We used to have fun answering the last question with "Arctic Pitbull."

We all laughed when we remembered the two saleswomen from an advertising agency who came by our plush new Cambridge offices. They were showing us their book when George, who was lying near one woman, started to make whooping noises.

"What's that?" asked the woman.

"He's going to throw up," I responded while quickly marshalling Wall Street Journals to place underneath his mouth.

The women shrieked and closed themselves into a windowless, unlit, 2' x 2' closet, refusing to emerge for several minutes.

Trying to numb myself with fatigue, I ran six miles through the woods near my house, up and down hills that overlook the city and ocean. The run, which I'd done a hundred times with George, was a painful reminder that things weren't the same. I missed the joy of admiring his powerful athleticism in jumping over rocks and fallen trees or in plunging through thickets. It used to make me happy just to look at George, sleeping, lying down, walking, or running.

My friend Mark came over with some Chinese food for which I had little appetite. He'd been in psychoanalysis for years and had absorbed a healthy dose of psychology theory, yet couldn't say much to comfort me. Halfway through dinner Brenda called from her house with the bad news: she'd convinced the senior pathologist to come in, and he'd diagnosed liver cancer that had metastasized (spread to other tissues). George wouldn't live more than a few days and would do so in pain.

"He's crying now, and I don't think he should have to endure the night. Some people wish to remember their dog as he was; you don't have to come back in."

The thought of George dying alone made me shudder, and I was very grateful that Brenda was willing to meet me at the hospital.

I couldn't eat another bite of food, but I did manage to take a shower and put on some decent clothes. I drove hurriedly to Angell Memorial, my mind blank of everything but the worry that George might die of weakness before I arrived. I didn't want George to die in the noisy intensive care unit with so many other pathetic cases all about. I carried George, who was too weak to walk at this point, and walked with Brenda to a quiet grassy area outside. I used to pick George up and hug him all the time, and even carried him

around the Lincoln Memorial for 15 minutes once (“you are allowed to bring dogs in the Memorial as long as you carry them”). Despite having lost a few pounds in the hospital, George seemed heavier than expected.

We all lay down on the grass together. It was a perfect June night, warm and clear. I held George in my arms and talked to him. I told him how I’d always felt that I had to do something exceptional for him to repay him for the love he’d given me. I told him I was sorry for saying, “I’ll be finished with my start-up companies and Ph.D. soon and then we can spend a year exploring North America together.” (George loved hiking through the woods more than anything else.) He gave a mournful yelp every few seconds; it was an eerie, utterly unfamiliar sound. This was a dog who would, in turning around to investigate a cellophane package being opened, hit his head on a sharp table corner so hard that everything on the table flew six inches into the air; not only would he not yelp, but he would not appear to have noticed. Every cry now felt like a physical slash to my chest.

I asked Brenda to give him the barbiturate overdose. I was cradling him and could feel his heart and lungs working hard. I felt them stop a few seconds after the injection.

Lying down and holding his body, I felt freer than I had in days and was able to talk with Brenda for 10 minutes without straining not to cry. I wanted desperately to tell her about George so that she didn’t think of him the way she’d met him: weak, helpless, and sickly. Although it was very comforting to be with Brenda and what was left of George, I didn’t want to impose on her generosity. I carried George’s body, which felt twice as heavy now, back into the hospital and cried all the way home. It had been only 78 hours from the time I suspected anything was wrong with George until he was dead. I fell asleep at 3:00 AM.

My mother woke me Monday morning with a phone call from my Aunt Marge’s in New Jersey. Marge was in tears, and my parents expressed their regret. However, they would not be coming up to Boston; my father had caught a cold, and they were driving back to Washington.

If my parents weren’t exactly the resources I’d hoped they’d be, my friends more than made up for it. Bruce and Henry called all my friends and told them the bad news so that I’d be spared awkward moments in the weeks ahead (“by the way, how’s George?”). Most of them called back and offered their sympathy. For the next two weeks, I couldn’t go one hour without someone offering me dinner, a shoulder to cry on, or their assistance in any task.

Best of all, friends offered happy memories of George. Mitzi remembered the night he was running into the sun and rammed a thin aluminium pole in Harvard Yard. He gave a surprised cry, then staggered back 50 feet to meet me and lay down at my feet, bleeding profusely from the nose. George wanted me to hold him for a few minutes before he resumed walking around. I recalled that, rather than get off



the bed after 10 minutes to lie on the cold floor, he lay in my arms that entire night.

Cathy remembered the time we were walking through the suburbs and were set upon by an angry 100 lb. Dalmatian that had escaped from someone’s backyard. She froze and hid a bit behind her female German Shepherd, but noticed that I instinctively got in front of George and her, prepared to give the Dalmatian a discouraging kick. “I couldn’t believe that your first impulse was to worry about George and not yourself.”

Although George in his later years was ready to fight with big male dogs, he never killed anything and shrugged off small threats. Cats who attacked him never got worse than a punch in the face or a mouth-hold then a toss. Small dogs who attacked were basically ignored. Children who pulled his hair and tried to ride him were suffered in silence, although he did try to escape them. Just two weeks before George died, exploring with his sister Sky, he approached and sniffed a baby bird that had fallen out of its nest and was walking around the ball field a few blocks from my house. They let it pass unmolested, and it walked under a fence into a yard where two Siberian Husky bitches killed it within seconds, then didn’t bother to eat it. George wasn’t that kind of dog.

I remembered our first swim. I took him up to the reservoir on top of a forested hill, about 10 minutes walk from my house. Arctic dogs know that water is deadly, and he wanted no part of it. I dragged him in and then blocked his return to shore. He eventually learned to love swimming and would come when called to the middle of the lake. George would even go swimming on subzero days. His outer fur was so well-insulated from his body heat that it would freeze, eventually thawing into a filthy mess inside the house.

My happiest thought was that I’d spent more hours with George in seven years than most people spend with dogs that live a full life. It took us a year to really get close to each other, but after that George was always with me at work, at home, on many trips, at most parties (my friends would invite him and not me!), at MIT, etc. I gave up sports that I couldn’t do with George. I was reluctant to go on trips of any length if I couldn’t take him.

George felt the same way about me. To look at him eat, you'd think he loved nothing more than food. Yet if I carried something out to the car while he was eating, he'd leave his food and rush out the door, afraid of being left behind.

Hurt though I was, I remained thankful for a few things. Foremost was that I was not responsible for George's death. If I'd left the gate open and he'd been hit by a car, I never would have forgiven myself. I had taken him to his regular vet just two months ago for a checkup. Even if he had found something, it would only have meant prolonged agony for me and complex, perhaps painful, and certainly ultimately futile treatment for George. I was thankful that I only spent four days worrying that my baby might die. I was thankful that Fate sent us Brenda Griffin to be with us during those last moments. I was thankful that my friends proved to be so loyal and caring.

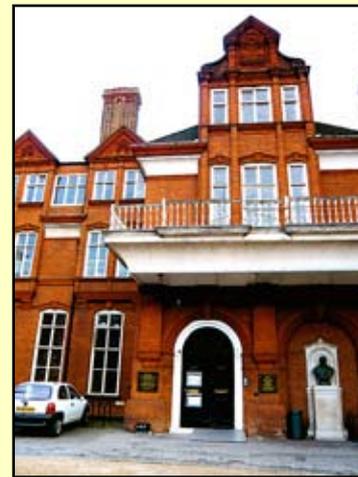
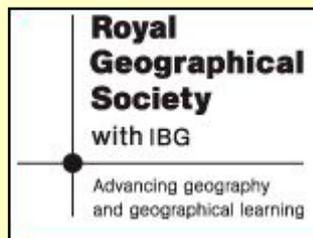
Bereft of George, I couldn't understand how a lot of people make it through the day. Without a dog, child, or spouse, why don't they ache inside? Friends only go so far, families are often spread far apart, and most love affairs don't last long enough these days to become deep and rich in understanding.

That was in June, 1991. Two years later, I was still asking myself the same questions. I felt kind of stupid grieving over a dog, but then I read a short piece in Harvard magazine that claimed it might well be more difficult to get over the loss of a dog than of a family member. "One often has mixed feelings about relatives, but few people could identify serious problems in their relationships with dogs."

I'd go away on a trip or fall in love with a woman and say, "OK, now I've recovered from George's death." Then Life would throw me a curve, and my reaction revealed to me how fragile George's death had left me. I decided to take the trip we were going to take together, Boston to Alaska and back, rather than wait until I finished my Ph.D. This book is about the summer I spent seeing North America, meeting North Americans, and trying to figure out how people live.



Photo.net is a web site designed for the photographic community. However, it is more than that, which is why I've included it here. Apart from *Travels with Samantha* there are many other pages that will be of interest to the traveller, and, let's face it, most travellers carry a camera with them. So, even if you don't think of yourself as a photographer, there are many pages here that will interest you.



If you're serious about following in the steps of Livingstone, Scott, Hilary, Shackleton and Darwin etc. you must join this illustrious society and take full advantage of your membership by visiting its base in London (near the Royal Albert Hall) and enjoying the vast collection of maps, journals and photographs available to members. Also attend the various lectures by explorers. If you're planning something really serious, then a useful starting point would be the *The Royal Geographical Society's Expedition Handbook* (available from Amazon.com)

The Royal Geographical Society is a British learned society founded in 1830 with the name Geographical Society of London for the advancement of geographical science, under the patronage of King William IV. It absorbed the 'Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa' - also known as the African Association - (founded by Sir Joseph Banks in 1788), the Raleigh Club and the Palestine Association. It was given a Royal charter by Queen Victoria in 1859.

From the middle of the 19th century until the end of World War I, expeditions sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society were frequently front page news, and the opinions of its president and board members would be avidly sought by journalists and editors.

Today the Society is a leading world centre for geographical learning - supporting education, teaching, research and scientific expeditions, as well as promoting public understanding and enjoyment of geography. It is a member of the Science Council. The society has merged with the Institute of British Geographers and is properly known as the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers). The main offices of the Society are at Lowther Lodge in Kensington, in London.

The society also presents many awards to geographers that have contributed to the advancement of geography. The most prestigious of these awards are the Gold Medals (Founder's Medal 1830 and the Patron's Medal 1838). The award is given for "the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery", and are approved by Queen Elizabeth II.

Into Africa



This 1798 map is by J Rennell, courtesy of URL: http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/african-association/african-association.html. More about African Exploration may be found at their home page at URL: http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/contents.html

A couple of pages previously, I mentioned that the Royal Geographical Society had incorporated The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, also known as the African Association.

The beginning of the age of African exploration can be dated to the day - June 9, 1788, a Monday - and almost to the hour. That evening, nine titled Londoners led by Sir Joseph Banks, the great naturalist and friend of Captain James Cook, met for dinner in an upstairs private room at St. Albans Tavern off Pall Mall. They were members of the *Saturday's Club*. 10 years later the above map was published by J. Rennell. This can be compared with another map he published in 1790 at URL: http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/african-association/african-association.html from where I found the text for this paragraph.

A fascinating book published in 1798, entitled *Proceedings of The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; containing an abstract of Mr. Park's account of his Travels and Discoveries* may be downloaded from URL: <http://books.google.com.ph/books?id=8L4NAAAQAAJ&pg=PP1&ots=pjgeSJKnKz&q=The+Association+for+Promoting+the+Discovery+of++the+Interior+Parts+of+Africa&hl=en&output=html>

Click on picture above to go to Africa!

The *Africa Overland* web site (URL: <http://www.africa-overland.net/Africa>) provides a wonderful selection of stories written by folks who have got off their bums and gone travelling across Africa - as well as to other places - including many who have done *Round the World* trips.

The stories are written by ordinary folks like you and I - NOT by professional explorers and TV presenters trying to grab the headlines. People like: *We are Janet and Chris and will be leaving on the 3rd June to overland to South Africa in our Toyota Hi-Ace Camper van. We will be travelling out via Russia, Central Asia and the Middle East and returning via Central and West Africa. We expect to be away for 2 years.*

When I was somewhat younger than I am now (in about 1968 or so), my ambition was to drive around the world. Sadly, I still haven't achieved that ambition - but it's not too late. I also want to drive across Australia, something my father did in early 1946. Would anyone care to join us?

Duksjourney

an african odyssey

Don't think about it just do it.....

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.duksjourney.net/>

Welcome to Duksjourney's, first let me confirm that after 2 years, 80,000 kilometres and 40 countries the Kat, the DuK and I are safely home. It has been the adventure of a lifetime and now we want to give something back.

To Africa a special thank you, she made us welcome, she made us laugh, she made us cry, but above all she made us live.

So, do all our friends and family think we are crazy? Yes, is the simplest answer (there have been quite a few other comments that cannot be published). We also began to think we had lost the plot, but then we started to meet other maddened souls like us who were fed up of the nine-to-five existence. People who also still held desires of adventure and living life rather than enduring it. Thanks to so many (especially Katja's Dad, Heiner) we began to realise our dream of escaping was possible and achievable. That is where the hard work began.

Our motto in life is , "Learn as if forever, live as if tomorrow is your last". We intend to do just that. How long has it taken to get this far? It is a long and arduous exercise, not because of the logistics and distance, but simply because the World has become wrapped in so much politics and "red tape". The hardest part of an expedition of this choice is paperwork; visa, carnet de passage, vehicle insurance, personal insurance health insurance, but to name a few. There simply isn't easy access to information for such trips. But hopefully through sharing knowledge we shall, like so many did for us, make the whole process that little bit easier.

What do we leave behind? Our two little troublesome bundles of fluff "Husky & Smokey" and of course our thoughts and love with our families without who's support we could never have embarked on such a bold adventure



Expedition Overland

Michael & Sandy's Adventure Around the World

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.expeditionoverland.com/index.htm>

We have just arrived home in Nottingham, having completed our journey around the world. We visited 62 countries and covered a distance of nearly 120,000km, (enough to circumnavigate the globe at the equator three times). The world has so many breathtakingly beautiful places and we are privileged to have experienced just some of them. We were exposed to so many different cultures and in our experience we discovered that for the most part, the world is a remarkably kind and benevolent place. We felt uplifted and encouraged to see so much friendliness and generous spirit from people all over the world.

We aren't strangers to travel, having travelled with friends through Mozambique and Botswana, as well as organising a nine-month expedition with 14 other members, from South Africa to the United Kingdom in 1994/1995. However, we have never done anything quite this adventurous before and we thought you might find it interesting to know a little bit more about a husband and wife team who were willing to pack it all in and see the world...



We live in Barton-in-Fabis which is a lovely little village south of Nottingham. It has a strong sense of community and we have left behind good friends and neighbours. We both worked for Boots The Chemists at the head office in Beeston, and are looking forward to skipping the office routine for a while.

Here is an extract from one of their journals: We left Ushuaia and went down a lovely steep track to one of the lakes. We saw crystal clear water tumbling down the mountain and when we got to the lake we skimmed stones across the glassy surface. Then we saw a squall coming across the lake and with it, the snow!

We took the less travelled, back road to Porvenir. We were rewarded with stunning scenery and a very quaint border post on the Chilean side. The official was catching 40 winks on the couch in front of the fire when we arrived. Then we discovered the bridge across the border river was broken so only heavy vehicles could cross - that's OK, we thought, they must mean only vehicles big enough to ford the river! Besides, at over 5 tons we're pretty heavy. The border official kindly walked down to the river to show us the best place to cross. It was running quite fast, but posed no problems for Nyathi!

On the Argentinian side I think it was the official's first time to do a temporary import for a foreign registered vehicle. He took forever to make sure he got it all right. We sat patiently looking at the grotesque posters warning against foot and mouth disease and studying two enormous pieces of paper up on the wall which depicted the various ear markings for sheep on the twenty or so surrounding estancias.

We drove down to Lago Blanco through a stunning forest, 'chasing' two horses which had bolted out into the road at our approach. The lake had free camping, but the wind was so strong we decided against it. It was beautiful and the water was very choppy from the strong, cold wind. We opted for a little spot down an unused road in amongst the forest. It was slightly protected from the wind and very peaceful. Soon enough the snow began to fall and it seemed surreal to be cooking dinner on the gas stove outside with snowflakes drifting down around me. The temperature fell to -1°C, so we were glad to have a warm bed to crawl into...

World Record Tour



Courtesy of URL: http://www.weltrekordreise.ch/a_starte.html

If it's inspiration you need to get you going to foreign climes, Emil and Liliana will provide it for you.

They have been driving their Toyota Land Cruiser around the world since 1 January 1985 - 23.5 years - so far! They have covered more than 625 000 kilometres and visited 158 countries. As I write this they are in New Zealand. Sadly, we have only just found their web site or we'd have invited them to stay with us during their visit to the Philippines in February. Although they did visit the Philippines (by air; renting a car on arrival) their web site says: ***The Philippines remain the first and only country, where an entry with the car became an impossibility. Although the application to the Philippines' government for the vehicle's permit was initiated 16 months previously, it wasn't possible to receive it.*** That's no surprise to anyone who knows this dreadful country.

They hold records in the *Guinness Book of Records* for:

- * The longest driven journey
- * The most kilometres/miles
- * The most countries in a single car

It began with a dream on the part of a Swiss couple, Emil and Liliana Schmid: to have a year free from schedules to explore the world, remote back roads, unique cultures and peoples, and the beauty of nature. The dream grew into an epic reality with the purchase of a Toyota Land Cruiser FJ60 in 1982 and the couple's departure in October 1984. Destination: Montreal in Canada.

North and South America - 1984-1988

One year soon proved insufficient for travelling throughout North and Central America, and after two years, 98 000 km/61 000 miles and seven countries, even incidents with



guerrillas and bandits could not deter them and their faithful vehicle.

They embarked on a 66 000 km/41 000 miles/10 countries circumnavigation of scenic and challenging South America. From Tierra del Fuego to Colombia, their two year jaunt carried them through deserts, volcanoes, glaciers, swamps and the Amazon Jungle.

From Africa to "No Worries" - Australia 1989-1992

Their travel bugs still biting, Schmid's continued on to Africa, all 97 000 km/60 000 miles and 34 countries, with challenges from mud-choked roads to 200-meter/600 ft-high sand dunes and rewards like brilliant desert nights under the stars, the awakening jungle at dawn, and the diversity of traditions and customs.

After Africa's excitements, Australia was a welcome vacation as the Schmid's explored the deserted West, the rugged South, the green East, and the hot North, taking advantage of the adventures offered by the Outback tracks (39 000 km/24 000 miles).

Asia and the Middle East - 1993-1995

The jump into Asia was a thrilling change: The stunning temples, sandy beaches and deep jungle, along with the kind people are memories of this region.

As they traveled to the Middle East, they were greeted with endless deserts, fascinating architecture, safe passage and deep Arab tradition.

Europe and entering the Guinness Book of Records - 1996-1998

After traveling through 100 000 km/62 000 miles and 28 countries in Asia, the Schmid's crossed the Ural Mountains in 1995, returning to Europe. Their travels through this culturally rich continent lasted three years. From Gibraltar to the North Cape of Norway, they traveled through 45 countries and 84 000 km/52 000 miles. It was at the Vatican, the smallest state in the world, when in May 1997 they achieved a triple lead in the Guinness Book of Worldrecords: for the most countries, the most kilometers and the most years in a single car (www.guinnessworldrecords.com). Until now they visited 150 countries, driving >584 000 km/363 000 miles during nearly 20 years.

Arabia, Far East and Northern America - 1999-2000

Europe could not hold the Schmid's any longer. In January 1999, they headed to Arabia for the third time - to the UAE and Oman. This fascinating corner of the world was love at first sight for them already in 1994 and became one of their favorite regions. In Dubai, the speedometer of their LandCruiser reached on 16th March the 500 000th km/ 310 690 miles. Mid 1999, they changed from the beauty of the desert of traditional Arabia to a subtropical lush green world: South Korea and Japan.

Their eleven weeks' journey through the hilly islands of Japan presented them with a still untamed nature. They appreciated the exceptional courtesy and friendliness of the people and their very safe passage through this Far East country.

On 9th September 1999, they landed on the North American continent where their epic journey began.

North America, South America and Caribbean Islands - 2001-2004

With the goal to explore all 50 US states on the mainland of North America, they headed for the second time through this diverse continent, where the exceptional beauties of nature, the endless open land in the West and the "Indian Summer" in Atlantic Canada kept them for many months. Then, the longing for more exotic places overwhelmed them again. They embarked to the Caribbean Islands of Dominican Republic, Haiti and Puerto Rico. Those beautiful islands with their great hospitality, contagious joy for life, happy

music and palm-fringed beaches made it easy to leave behind fond memories and the desire to return again.

In June 2002, the need for more "pepper in the soup" and "off the beaten track" adventures brought them back to the South American continent after having heard that there would now exist a jungle track connecting Northern Brazil to the three Guyana's, the only countries still missing on the American mainland. These small countries pushed their LandCruiser and themselves to the limits through incredibly muddy tracks and dense rain forest. The beautiful rewards were the cries of howler monkeys, calls of tropical birds, noises of unknown creatures and the luxury tropical vegetation. And not only once they found Jaguar tracks around their solitary camp in the morning.

Still infected by the travel bug and still obsessed by the desire to travel to the most possible of the 193 sovereign and 64 non-sovereign states and territories in the world, they pushed themselves into a new, even more difficult logistical adventure: "Cruising" the whole Caribbean with their LandCruiser. From May 2003 to December 2004, they hopped through these wonderful islands, fighting against strange laws for the temporary entry of their vehicle, learning to deal with dangers of hurricanes and simply enjoying the turquoise waters, powdery white palm fringed beaches and the multi cultural friendly and happy Caribbean people. In this exotic atmosphere, they were proud to celebrate two more milestones in their epic journey: On July 26th, 2004 they reached their 150th country – the island of Anguilla - which simultaneously became the last of their totally visited 17 Caribbean islands. And shortly after, on October 18th, 2004, the anniversary of being 20 years on the road took place in Sint Maarten on the Netherlands Antilles. At the end of the year they left this unique beautiful region and returned to Guyana on the South American continent.

South America - 2005

In the North of South America, a period of "rejuvenation" should have started for the Schmid's, because the past 20 years definitely demanded its tribute on their Toyota LandCruiser, which is understandable. But unfortunately, this vision has been smashed. Although most of the local Toyota distributors were more than generous when visiting their particular country, wishing their epic journey to continue, now for them it is logistically and also financially a nearly impossible task to upgrade their loyal companion to that level that it would be able to visit also the next '50 countries and 250 000 miles'. The global Toyota Motor Corporation in Japan until now inexplicably denied the support for their world record - although worldwide many Toyota distributors urged them to do so – despite that the vehicle got already fame in the Guinness Book of World Records, proving thus also its achievements regarding quality, reliability and durability which poses for TMC an enormous marketing potential - facts, competitors can only dream of! Why do they show deaf ears to these specialists working at the front?

But the Schmid's did not let them discourage from this

knock down. Traveling and their longing for new adventures having become too much part of their life. With a big portion of optimism, they continued their journey from Georgetown/Guyana to French Guiana, where on 7.7.2005 their LandCruiser achieved its 600 000th km in front of the post office in Cayenne. Shortly afterwards, on July 29th, 2005, the trio split up: The LandCruiser went on a two months long sea journey from French Guyana through France to Singapore and the Schmid's followed by air via the US-Hong Kong-Macao. New land was calling!

South East Asia - 2005-2007

The exotic of South East Asia captured the Schmid's from the very first day again. On well known paths, they first crossed Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Then, on December 9th, 2005, they entered new land again: Cambodia, their 151st nation. They loved it at first sight: Angkor Wat, the rural life and especially the broad smiles of the people - everything was so strange, so new, so exciting. It was there where they experienced their first accident on their 21 years journey around the world: On their way to Vietnam, Mrs. Schmid was hit by a Cambodian car on Christmas Day 2005 at the Mekong ferry crossing. Result: Broken leg and a gypsum cast. Despite this handicap, they continued to Vietnam and Laos. And nearly, they made it also to Myanmar. But at the last moment, their visit was hampered by new rules applied from the Burmese authorities. But Myanmar is still on their wish list and not cancelled yet, just postponed. Back in Thailand, a new planning phase started. Because the condition of their LandCruiser deteriorated more and more, and because the possibility of overhauling it in East Malaysia's Sarawak popped up, they sent it without hesitation from Penang to Borneo. During the following three months, the car was taken apart completely, derusted and repaired. It was the first engine overhaul after 381 800 miles of driving. After a test drive through Brunei and Sabah in East Malaysia, the result showed to be enjoyable, allowing the Schmid's to continue confidently for an indefinite time to come. In the meantime, the car's permit to enter Indonesia arrived, thus they entered Kalimantan on November 18th. Indonesia is not only a huge and diverse country, the incredible number of islands require a lot of patience as well as the necessary existence of ferry connections. After they were able to visit during their first six months nine islands, they entered on May 15th, 2007, their 156th country Timor-Leste.

Note: *Emil and Liliana's story was such an inspiration to me that I sent them a couple of e-mails and a text message. Their (slightly edited) reply is in the next column.*

Tauranga/New Zealand, June 16, 2008

Dear Grace and Alan,

First, thank you very much for your two emails and the SMS, which we received quite a while ago. But the internet here in New Zealand isn't the ultimate show - the Philippines had a much better working net! Sorry for the delay!

Now to your questions: No, we didn't really succeed in entering the Philippines. Although we received, finally, all the permits to drive around the country (customs, land transport, etc.), we had to give it a miss. The reason was that somewhere down the line a "small" officer had the idea that we should send the personal belongings in the car (and that's quite a lot) separately packed, which would have meant that we would have had to take a 40' container instead of the common 20'. Although we applied to the Secretary of Tourism for reconsideration and our Swiss embassy in Manila and the Filipino Consul in Brunei helped us tremendously, the precondition of two warehouses couldn't be overturned.

That said, we still wanted to visit the Philippines. While the vehicle was on its way from Hong Kong to New Zealand, we flew with a budget carrier to Clark, rented a small car and drove around Luzon then flew with another budget airline from Clark to Malaysia and, via Australia, to New Zealand. Being just in Luzon, we really regretted not having our car with us to explore the whole country! But Papua New Guinea wasn't any better as that government also had problems with a temporary entrance of a foreign vehicle, despite the danger of getting robbed or kidnapped on the Highlands Highway. New Zealand however is very safe, but unfortunately pretty expensive and chilly - at least now in wintertime.

Anyway, mid-July we are shipping to New Caledonia and later to Vanuatu and more Pacific Islands. All of them have a problem with a temporary car import - a sailing yacht is however never an issue - but they are in general more flexible than the Philippines and Papua New Guinea and it worked out at the end.

On our way we crossed Subic Bay, and of course - if we had known - would have liked to visit you. But postponed doesn't mean cancelled; however you will live sooner in England than we might reach the Philippines again - if ever!

We wish you all the best from cold New Zealand:

Emil & Liliana Schmid



From The Times
March 13, 2008

Child protection? No, ruination

Two men are incarcerated by the State, when they should be the stability in two children's lives.

by Camilla Cavendish

If you look up Hansard, the parliamentary record, you can read the name of a man I wrote about three weeks ago. Prisoner X, whom I called Hugh, was jailed for helping his pregnant wife and her son to flee the country to escape from social workers. An MP has named him in the House of Commons, to express concern at his treatment. But The Times still cannot print his name.

It is a longstanding convention of British law that individuals who are incarcerated should be identified, and the charges against them made known. That is an age-old protection against tyranny. But today the "privacy of the child" trumps every other principle, whether or not the child in question wants his or her privacy protected. In this case it seems very unlikely indeed that the gag on everyone involved serves the interests of anyone except the authorities who put it there.

Prisoner X's mistake, in brief, was to fall in love with a woman who had been unfortunate enough to suffer a violent and volatile first marriage. As a result of the breakdown of that marriage, her young son had been taken into temporary foster care. A court stipulated that the boy should be returned to his mother once she had "sorted her life out" and found them a new home.

But even as she cleared every hurdle, social workers dreamt up new ones. The offers of her own mother and sister, both professionals with good incomes, to foster the boy, were apparently ignored. A psychologist cautioned that the boy was suffering dreadfully in care. One night in September, the boy let himself out of his foster home and ran back to his mother. Prisoner X, now her husband, drove them to Dover and on to Paris.

Many people would call this an act of love, a mercy mission. But this man is now serving 16 months in jail. Child abduction is undoubtedly a serious crime. But this was a strange kind of abduction. At the hearing it was made clear that the boy had packed his own suitcase, set his alarm clock for 4am and run away of his own accord to be reunited with his mother.

Nevertheless, Prisoner X is classified as a violent criminal. He is apparently unlikely to get early release, unlike the 1,730 robbers and 3,484 people convicted of violence

against the person, who have been let out since June. Nor can he be put on a tag, because his classification is deemed to make him a risk to the public. But what risk? Surely not that posed by Joseph Booth, the convicted teenage mugger who, it was revealed yesterday, ripped off his electronic tag before murdering an innocent student. The attack was so savage that the victim's family could not recognise his body. Booth had previous convictions for threatening behaviour, assault, battery and robbery.

Prisoner X has never harmed anyone. He is 56 years old and has high blood pressure. Every day that goes by, he risks losing his business and letting down those he employs. Every day that goes by, his health is deteriorating. A friend says that he has aged ten years and gone grey with the worry.

The system is merciless to people who question the system. Charles Roy Taylor, whom I wrote about at Christmas, is in a similar situation. Mr Taylor is a 71-year-old with a heart condition. He was sent to prison for 20 months for being in contact with his stepgrandson, who has been in care since his mother died and who has repeatedly run away to see his grandparents. By breaching an agreement not to answer the door to him, Mr Taylor stands accused of "undermining the care plan". But he and the boy's grandmother are the teenager's only living relatives. They will presumably be his first port of call when he comes of age and is thrown out of the care system. Mr Taylor may not survive that long: last week he suffered an angina attack that put him in hospital for four days. Is that in the interests of the boy?

Both of these men are under court orders not to talk about their cases. It is likely that these gagging orders will continue after they leave prison, even though they will have "done their time". Yet they, at least, have had some control over their fates. They must have had some inkling of what they might be letting themselves in for. The boys they were trying to help have never asked to be let in for anything, except it seems for contact with their families.

Both these boys are gagged by the State. We are not entitled to know what they think, nor whether the boy who is now abroad with his mother is happy. We cannot hear from them why each wanted so badly to escape from care. Only social workers may translate their words and determine where their "interests" lie. Yet the two men who are now in jail did not risk going there for nothing. Each seems to have believed that they were saving a boy from something unpleasant. Why? Who are the real victims of this system of "child protection"? It is hard to see what the children gain from the incarceration of men who could be providing stability in their lives.

There are many good reasons why the law seeks to protect the identity of children. The problem comes when the rules are used to protect the identity of the professionals too. This prevents proper scrutiny of cases whose very complexity makes it almost inevitable that some will go wrong. The effect is to place social workers above the law, and innocent people under its thumb.

It is in no one's interests, least of all the children involved, to keep these two men behind bars. If only they could be released, if the system could show some mercy, perhaps we might be able to begin the long process of dismantling the bars that imprison the children too. Behind silence lurks injustice.

The previous story published on 21 February 2008:

Last autumn a small English congregation was rocked by the news that two of its parishioners had fled abroad. A 56-year-old man had helped his pregnant wife to flee from social workers, who had already taken her son into care and were threatening to seize their baby.

Most people had no idea why. For the process that led this couple to such a desperate act was entirely secret. The local authority had warned the mother not to talk to her friends or even her MP. The judge who heard the arguments from social services sat in secret. The open-minded social workers who had initially been assigned to sort out a custody battle between the woman and her previous husband were replaced by others who seemed determined to build a guilty case against her. That is how the secret State operates. A monumental injustice has been perpetrated in this quiet corner of England; our laws are being used to try to cover it up.

I will call this couple Hugh and Sarah. Neither they nor their families have ever been in trouble with the law, as far as I know. Sarah's only fault seems to have been to suffer through a violent and volatile first marriage, which produced a son. When the marriage ended, the boy was taken into temporary foster care for a few months - as a by-product of the marriage breakdown and against her will - while she "sorted her life out" and found them a new home. But even as she cleared every hurdle set by the court, social workers dreamt up new ones. The months dragged by. A psychologist said the boy was suffering terribly in care and was desperate to come home. Sarah's mother and sister, both respected professionals with good incomes, apparently offered to foster or adopt him. The local authority did not even deign to reply.

For a long time, Sarah and her family seem to have played along. At every new hearing they thought that common sense would prevail. But it didn't. The court appeared to blame her for not ending her marriage more quickly, which had put strain on the boy, while social workers seemed to insist that she now build a good relationship with the man she had left. Eventually, she came to believe that the local authority intended to have her son adopted. She also seems to have feared that they would take away her new baby, Hugh's baby, when it was born. One night in September they fled the country with the little boy. When Hugh returned a few days later, to keep his business going and his staff in jobs, he was arrested.

Many people would think this man a hero. Instead, he received a far longer sentence - 16 months for abduction - than many muggers. This kind of sentence might be justified,

perhaps, to set an example to others. But the irony of this exemplary sentence is that no one was ever supposed to know the details. (I am treading a legal tightrope writing about it at all.) How could a secret sentence for a secret crime deter anyone?

Sarah's baby has now been born, in hiding. I am told that the language from social services has become hysterical. But if the State was genuinely concerned for these two children, it would have put "wanted" pictures up in every newspaper in Europe.

It won't do that, of course, because to name the woman and her children would be to tear a hole in the fabric of the secret State, a hole we could all see through. I would be able to tell you her side of the story, the child's side of the story. I would be able to tell you every vindictive twist of this saga. And the local authority knows perfectly well how it would look. So silence is maintained.

And very effective it is too. The impotence is the worst thing. The way that perfectly decent individuals are gagged and unable to defend themselves undermines a fundamental principle of British law. I have a court order on my desk that threatens all the main actors in this case with dire consequences if they talk about it to anyone.

Can that really be the way we run justice in a country that was the fount of the rule of law? At the heart of this story is a little boy who was wrenched from the mother he loves, bundled around in foster care and never told why, when she appears to have been perfectly capable of looking after him. When she had relatives who were perfectly capable of doing so. In the meantime, he was becoming more and more troubled and unhappy. To find safety and love, that little boy has had to leave England.

What does that say about our country? The public funds the judges, the courts, the social workers. It deserves to know what they do. That does not mean vilifying all social workers, or defending every parent. But it does mean ending the presumption of guilt that infects so many family court hearings. It does mean asking why certain local authorities seem unable to let go of children whose parents have resolved their difficulties. It does mean knowing how social workers could have got away with failing to return this particular boy, after his mother had met all the criteria set by a judge at the beginning. It is simply unacceptable that social services have put themselves above the law.

We need these people to be named, and to hear in their words what happened. We need to open up the family courts. We need to tear down the wall of secrecy that has forced a decent woman to live as a fugitive, to save her little boy from a life with strangers, used like a pawn in a game of vengeance. Even if the local authority were to drop its case, it is hard to see how Sarah could ever trust them enough to return. At home, for their God-fearing congregation, the question is simple: what justice can ever be done behind closed doors? And in whose name?

Alan's Reflections

Alan's Reflections

This may seem obvious: I've been thinking just how much of a learning experience living life really is. During this lengthy time of unemployment, I've felt very privileged to have had the time to learn, to study and to take on board many things that I would have otherwise missed. It has also given me additional time in which to think. This is a privilege we rarely experience in a normal working life where so many of our waking hours are given over to earning a crust and the rest of the time devoted to other routine chores - and recovering from the stresses and strains of the working day. Of course, this is what our leaders want as we then don't spend our time thinking about what a mess they are making of the world - just in case we throw them out.

Another thing: Family life. One of the main problems in the west is the breakdown of family life and the effects of that on our social fabric. When I was a boy, mothers had the choice as to whether that wanted to work or not. In fact, before WWII, it was rare to find a working mother as the social system then frowned on mothers who dared to work. Nowadays, it is the norm for mothers to work and leave their children with others or even to fend for themselves. What sort of bond do those working mothers now have with their children? The bond that occurs when good quality time is spent with your children is irreplaceable and is often what holds families together through the bad times as well as good. The importance placed on material wealth, and the 'credit crunch' in recent times has exacerbated an already poor, often desperate, situation for many families.

The affects of bonding have certainly been brought home to me in recent times. As you all know, I'm a father of two families and can make a direct comparison, as both families have been brought up in different home environments. Compare these two cases:

Family One was brought up almost entirely by Mum (and she did a good job). I was the only breadwinner and soon after our first child was born I went to work on board ship. This meant I was away from home for a few months at a time. I came home from sea on one occasion and as I walked into the house there was Mum, standing in the room with a little head sticking out from either side of her as much as to say "who the hell is this who's just walked in?" Because of this I wasn't as close to my first children as I'd have liked to have been - but they were very close to their mother.

Family Two is being brought up by both Grace and I. The key factor here is that neither of us are working and we have a full-time, live-in, home help. That means we have a lot more good quality time to be with Little Lad - and with each other. The consequence of this is that Little Lad and I have a much closer, stronger bond than we would otherwise have had - and isn't that great? Of course it is.

One of the main responsibilities of a parent is to teach their child(ren) as much as they possibly can, and yet, my Little Lad has taught me things too. I have had, and continue to enjoy, a considerable learning experience from this small guy. Even though he can only say a few words his level of understanding of any of the three languages he has to deal with is remarkable. Once I get him to really listen to me, his level of understanding is very high. At only just 3 years old, he has really amazed me. Now, I'm sure many of you know what I'm talking about - especially if you're a mother, but this is news to me as I missed this with my first family and I've had to wait all these years to catch on! Not only are his linguistic skills so apparent either. His overall level of understanding of general matters is also higher than I would have expected in one so young.

I'll illustrate what I mean by these three little (recent) stories:

Only yesterday, Little Lad was in our bedroom and wanted to turn on the light. Not being tall enough to reach the switch, he went off and looked around until he spotted a short-handled broom. Returning to the bedroom, he used the broom-handle to push the switch toggle until the light came on.

I'd already tipped some breakfast cereal into a bowl and gone away for some reason. On returning, Little Lad came with me and noticed the cereal and immediately went to the refrigerator and brought me the milk I needed to pour on it.

Sitting in my office the other day, I was pouring with perspiration. Little Lad came to see me and spotted this. He said: *Daddy wet*. Then he immediately went to the bathroom, selected my towel (not just any towel), and brought it to me and started drying me with it.

He *notices* everything. Using his intelligence? Using initiative? Thinking? I'd say full marks for each. Now, of course, I'm biased - as is any parent about their offspring. Now, many of you are parents and many of you are teachers. Tell me what you think of this behaviour in one so young. I tease Grace by saying: *Well, at least it proves he's not a Filipino*.

The most valuable thing he has taught me is how to deal with him in a way he can understand, and how best to communicate with him - and how to get the best out of him instead of bringing out the worst in him (I don't always get it right!). If only adults could do that more effectively with each other!

One of Little Lad's weaknesses is that he is usually so absorbed with whatever he's doing that he doesn't **listen** to what is being said to him. He usually doesn't even **hear**. It drives Grace crazy! But there is a way around this - and I've learned this from him. Consequently, I now get Grace saying "he never listens to me" or "he always listens to you". I know only too well, that I would never have learned so much

from him or been able to communicate so effectively with him had I not had this period of unemployment. This has been so beneficial for my relationship with Little Lad - and for our family. I wonder how many other parents, and hence families, would benefit from periods of unemployment.

In the UK, men have been demonised by *Women's Lib*, *Gay Rights* and the *Social Services* (see previous article), who have all played a role in the destruction of traditional families and family values. Mass fatherlessness and unmarried motherhood have become the norm.

Our education system, once the best in the world, has been ripped apart by the do-gooders who expect everyone to have a certificate - even if it is worthless. It has now got to the point where some of the better universities are setting their own entrance examinations because they can no longer rely on the standard of the GCE A Level exam, about which Sir Richard Sykes, the Rector of Imperial College, London says: "*We can't rely on A levels any more. Everybody who applies has got three or four As. They [A levels] are not very useful.*" He added: "*We are doing this not because we don't believe in A levels, but we can't use the A level any more as a discriminator factor.*" The move will make Imperial, which specialises in science and engineering and ranks third in the UK after Oxford and Cambridge in The Times Good University Guide, the first university to introduce a university-wide entrance exam since Oxford scrapped its own version in 1995. (Courtesy of URL: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/education/article4061535.ece>)

Discipline has become a dirty word to the extent that parents and teachers are frightened of even touching a child. The police have become completely ineffective and paralysed by political correctness and human rights to the extent that crimes are committed and the criminals, even when caught, go unpunished. Most of the poor have become totally dependent on state welfare. On top of all that, our religious leaders have completely lost the plot, and therefore the respect of the communities they are supposed to serve, and our once great country is rapidly becoming Islamised - and colonised by what seems like every nationality under the sun - and no one dares say a word in protest. In short, the lives and prospects of huge numbers of people have been irresponsibly and irrevocably destroyed; as has the nation's identity and traditional values.

So where does that leave our children? In a state of confusion; lacking the security of a stable family and a safe and secure environment. They now have no guidelines to follow, no discipline, and the only people they look up to are those drug-crazed, pop and sport idols who are allowed to shove their faces into our living rooms via the TV screen and computer monitors and whose noise pounds our children's ear-drums to death through plug-in ear-phones connected to their mp3 players.

If every parent could (or would!) spend good quality time with their children (and switch the TV off), as I've been

fortunate enough to do; learning from their children, as well as teaching their children, juvenile crime would almost disappear and 'young offenders' and ASBO's would become a thing of the past. That would certainly reduce the level of crime committed by adults to a far lower level and our society would be a much pleasanter, and safer, place in which to live.

In almost all fields of human endeavour, individuals strive to improve themselves. Athletes try to run faster, jump higher etc. Engineers make things technologically more advanced to give a better performance or make something lighter or cheaper etc. People are always seeking improvement in every area - **except in the way we live - our society.**

Instead of striving for improvement, my country (and many other western countries) is now hell-bent on self destruction. The traditional British *common-sense* has become remarkably uncommon. The famed parliamentary, judicial, education and health systems are shadows of their former selves and we are being taken over by foreigners who are not only pouring in to claim the land of milk and honey as their own, but foreign companies now run most of our utilities and many other industries - even our water and electricity supplies. Our milk and honey are fast disappearing.

We have also sacrificed our independence as a nation to unknown and unseen powers in Brussels who run the country for us and seek to intrude even more with the ratification of the European Constitution disguised as the Treaty of Lisbon (we can be very thankful that the Irish people refused to accept it, although, no doubt in the future, it will come to fruition as all the other countries are hell-bent on signing on to this ridiculous piece of legislation and so bring to an end even the pretence of democracy in Europe).

Not only that, but we have destroyed our huge manufacturing and engineering industries, wiped out coal mining and are now entirely reliant on sources of energy from other countries (now that North Sea oil and gas have almost disappeared) and are likely to be even more in the hands of foreigners for our energy supplies in the near future as most of our nuclear power stations have been closed down (or are about to be) and no others are being built. One can only ask *why?*

Why has this been allowed to happen?

Why has Britain abandoned common sense and reason and embraced irrationality and sheer stupidity?

This is NOT what the average person in the UK wishes, so it means, of course, that democracy has completely FAILED. The politicians and elected leaders no longer take the wishes of the electorate into consideration AT ALL! You may remember that, following the *Rivers of Blood* speech of Enoch Powell in 1968, Powell received almost 120,000 (mainly positive) letters and a Gallup poll at the end of April showed that 74% of those asked agreed with his speech. **74%! Extrapolating that as being almost three-quarters**

of the adult population that agreed with what he said, surely that would be very good reason for the government to do something to halt immigration. Instead, they and subsequent governments either did nothing or actually encouraged immigration. In more recent times, the current Labour government won the election with the promise of a referendum for acceptance or otherwise of the European Constitution/Treaty of Lisbon, but reneged on their promise because they knew only too well that the British people would reject it - as did the Irish. So much for democracy. So who is doing the manipulating of our country? And who is really running Europe - and the World? It is certainly not the electorate and it cannot all be blamed on incompetent politicians. No, there MUST be something more behind it all.

Consider the U.S. disaster of 11 September 2001 when not only the twin towers fell, but another building was brought down too. To me (and many others), the fact that these three steel framed buildings actually fell down because of fire (Building 7 wasn't hit by an aeroplane or anything else) is somewhat controversial from an engineering perspective. However, **almost immediately** afterwards, on 20 September, President Bush, in an address to Congress, announced the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Is it too much to suggest that this department was already planned, long before 11 September, as a means of controlling even more rigidly, the American people - and those people wanting to enter the USA? Would it have been too much to expect the American people to swallow this without provoking them in some way? Is this why the Twin Towers disaster was initiated? Or was the disaster just an excuse to make the American people accept the start of the *War on Terror*? (the *Crusade*, as Bush called it at the time). Only time will tell.

We no longer live in a *free* society. We are living in a society that is becoming even more controlled and Orwellian as each day passes. Much of this is done in the name of security, but that surely is more of an excuse than reality demands. The media (and *who* controls the media?) always gives out the stories of terrorist threats that have been defused by the security forces, and how can we argue when we don't know if this is the truth or not? Politicians work hand in glove with the media barons and rarely tell the truth, the whole truth, and now, sadly, it has become, nothing like the truth. Of course there is a risk of terrorism in the UK now that all the foreigners have been allowed into the country. Especially from those who preach their messages of death and destruction from the mosques every week - preaching against those who are actually paying them to stay in the UK! How ridiculous is that? (to pay them, that is). To actually allow them to do this is a crime in itself.

Only recently (1 June), two Christian preachers were stopped from handing out Bible extracts by police because they were in a Muslim area. They say they were told by a (West Midlands) Muslim police community support officer that they could not preach there and that attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity was a hate crime.

The community officer is also said to have told the two men: *'You have been warned. If you come back here and get beat up, well, you have been warned.'* A police constable who was present during the incident in the Alum Rock area of Birmingham is also alleged to have told the preachers not to return to the district.

The noteworthy point about this incident is that it was a **Muslim** police ancillary officer who was involved. **He did not uphold the law of the land**, which gives people the freedom to say in public whatever they want within the law.

Instead he upheld the **Islamist** principle that this particular area of an English city was a **Muslim** area, within which it was not permissible to do anything contrary



Soldier of Allah - in London!

to Muslim principles such as preach Christianity. (Courtesy of URL: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/749096/britains-slide-into-dhimmocracy.shtml>) **And this in what has always been recognised as being a Christian country!**

And just think, these people have the same passports as me and my children - and call themselves BRITISH!

But this ridiculous way of life continues in the UK because someone, somewhere, wants my former great country, and Europe (which also controls my country against the will of the vast majority of the electorate) to be lost to Islam, and our Christian principles, as well as our way of life, to be destroyed. The next problem that Grace and I will have to face, is: *Where are we going to make our home?* I'm not talking about our rapidly approaching move to England. I'm talking about our move OUT of England, once Grace has her British passport. *Where are we going to live?* It certainly won't be in the Islamic State of Britain, let alone the Philippines. I wonder what our choice will be at that time?

Continuing sharing our thoughts on the decline of much of the world, Grace made a very valid point some time ago. She posed a question that is worth a lot of consideration. It went something like this: *How do all these so-called rebel groups get the money and weapons they need to get started?* As she pointed out: *Most of the people involved in these groups are extremely poor. It seems very strange that they can organise themselves into an army equipped with a fine selection of weapons and take on established governments and other recognised authorities.* These groups don't just happen; they are properly organised from on-high! Often by the very people who are supposed to be fighting terrorism and creating world-wide stability. That's right - the answer is usually the US government - through the auspices of the CIA (the biggest terrorist organisation in the world). One only has to read about the US involvement in Central America and the Far-East (Viet-Nam, Cambodia etc.) to

understand that it is the world's leaders themselves who are constantly stirring up trouble and causing the deaths of millions of people. The very people who should be bringing about peace and stability. And this is why, places like Darfur exist and continue to exist - and why nothing is being done to stop it.

One of course asks *why?* The answer, as usual, is **money and power**. Not just by individuals, but by cartels of companies and the major (some say 13 major, and interrelated) *old money* families who have so much money and power that they can practically control the whole world themselves. Ask questions like: *Why did the Asian currencies collapse so suddenly a few years ago?* The economies of all those countries didn't suddenly fall apart over night. They didn't all go bust over night. Of course not. This was a deliberately manipulated situation brought about to make various people and companies extremely rich in a very short time. There can be no other realistic explanation.

The other word that springs to mind in all this is **manipulation**. The world's leaders and politicians, as well as the world's media are very largely controlled by the people with the **real money** and **real power**. Imagine, if you will, that you were a person with untold wealth, power and influence. You don't need to be the front man, such as a president, to control whole economies and worldwide industries. You are in a position where you can be the puppeteer who controls the puppets of the world - like Bush - alongside your best pals and close family members as between you, you own and control practically the whole world. This is the scenario about which I'm writing and about which I'm concerned. If you really put your mind to it, this is not the Alice in Wonderland scene that you might at first think.

Just think about what has happened over the last fifty years or so to my country, and then ask *why?* Most countries are trying to improve themselves in many areas of life and industry, but the country that was once called, and thought of, as **Great Britain**, has lost the plot.

One only has to look at who is making vast sums of money around the world at the moment - and who has unlimited amounts of investments in the west - and consider the price of oil and gas, and one can see immediately who may be behind some of the things that are happening - and who may be controlling the leaders of the west to permit this crime to happen in my own country. In my opinion, this isn't just the already mentioned 13 families and company cartels (although they are doubtless involved) that are behind this; I suggest that some of this is new money from the middle east - the very heart of Islam. For some of the oil rich countries, their vast overseas investments are already making MORE money than the incredible sums they are making from their oil and gas supplies. And making money will continue on a huge scale even after the oil and gas run out. Doesn't it seem plausible that they are using some of their wealth to take over and Islamise the western countries without actually waging a military war on them (which they

would lose). Are they financing the Islamic revolution in the UK and taking over businesses and manipulating politicians and leaders? Do we have a new player in the international game of *Control the Planet?*

Something has been disturbing Grace and I for some years. At risk of you thinking us to be hysterical lunatics, I will share with you some of our thoughts. These thoughts were once again brought to my mind last evening when I stayed up late to watch one of Sir David Attenborough's superb documentaries. He closed with the words (almost verbatim and as close to it as I can remember): *Man has always controlled the environment in order to survive. Is it time this was reversed? Is it now time that man controlled the population so that the environment can survive?*

We have all watched the decimation of the African population by AIDS, genocide and starvation brought about by famine, war and corruption. Like most people around the world, we have seen the pictures of places like Darfur and asked the simple question *Why doesn't somebody DO something?* Is it too much to suggest that somebody IS doing something? And that somebody is deliberately permitting, nay *encouraging* these (often man-made or man-exacerbated) disasters to occur as a way of controlling the population.

The documentary discussed at length how the Maya Civilisation was brought down because farmers couldn't produce enough food to supply the ever increasing population, thereby ending an era of human civilisation. Was that a warning to us?

Are we now in a situation where the (deliberately induced?) upward spiralling cost of food will cause starvation and thereby the death of millions of people in the poorer parts of the world? Is population control the reason why former wealthy, food-exporting nations have been allowed to become beggars? Is this a deliberate move to reduce the world's population? Is the ridiculous political move to produce bio-fuel from food stocks a deliberate ploy to increase the cost of food (wheat in particular) thereby making a few people extremely rich and, by inducing food shortages, making many poor people starve to death?

The Philippines used to be an exporter of rice. Since returning much of the land to subsistence farming it has become a major importer of rice. There is now something of a panic in this country about rice being in short supply, the increasing cost of rice and how the poor people are going to be fed. The government send out soothing words via the media about having lots of rice in stock and subsidising the price etc. but at the end of the day, they aren't going to feed the nation free of charge. There is no welfare state here. It will be every man, woman and child for themselves. The survival of the wealthiest - as usual. I wonder how many of the 90 million people here will die

Are we too reaching the end of a civilisation, or an era, brought about in the same way as the Maya - or by Islam?



STARBUCKS COFFEE

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Photograph by Little Lad