

MIKES AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Gratitude (Mikes true story)

I wish to acknowledge my entrepreneurial, down to earth, Mum and Dad, (of the war generation), who were ahead of their timebig city dwellers, who ran a little toy making business, in Dads little shed,.....grew all their own food....built a house with no knowledge of building, and generally inspired us to follow in their 'have a go' footsteps

Pat, Dad, Phil, Mum, Mike

Consequently, my older brother and sister were fearlessly adventurous...and I was majorly inspired by my surfing brother who ventured down the coast of England, Europe, and Morocco, surfing, in 1965, and was found in Scandinavia and in front of the Kremlin, Moscow, that same year.....

Phil's now 78 and wants to get the dings fixed on his surfboard, so can go for a surfha!.....and he still heads off to Bali

Phil 2004

This autobiography is a book of endless risks.....Those dangerous risky early days of knives, guns, machetes, violence..... & lots and lots of fantastic

adventure! 1962, Dads car,....my
bother Phil driving,me out the window on the left with surfboard

Went from Ruakaka to Langs bch like this...no roof racks.....at least 10 miles on the main road (before the bypass).....try that today!!!!

Life is just a series of adventures (for all of us)

(scary or otherwise)

You may say "oh its alright for you to say"..."you haven't been in my shoes"...

Well before you disregard anything i sayif you wouldn't mind....i would like you to hear my story first, and then you will hopefully, be more informed, as to my somewhat brash statement above

Epilogue

Ime now 74 years of age.....retired ..of course, and what ime about to present to you,is not, a spur of the moment, flash of enlightenment, or any such revelation, of the profound meaning on life.....but rather,... a life long experience, of which, i have simply known, no other way,... but have been well aware, that many others,.... have sometimes taken, or often, chosen, a different path to deal with life, than what i have,.... and.. of course, for whatever reason....

I remember once.....my somewhat wealthy ex-father-in-law Paul, was confronted by his old school mates with somewhat venom in their conversation, referring to my father-in-laws somewhat lavish lifestyle compared to theirs...and I'll never forget his answer”we all went to school together, no one had any more advantage than anyone else, but i choose the hard road, they chose the easy road.....and now that my 40 yrs of hard work has paid off, why are they so bitter”

Paul.....in his Spiitfire....Britain

1942

But i have found, that it is mostly, often, due to our ‘small child’ experiences (negative or otherwise), and mainly our up-bringing or family dynamics (or lack of family dynamics) that has profoundly influenced our current behavior and attitude to life,.....and,.....as i grow older, i realize, that my attitude to life, started, way way back, ...(as a toddler), but, all along,it has been my personal decisions, all along the way, that has profoundly effected my life, and has stayed with me, even to this present day.....even as from, a young age

Decisions of attitude, that i realized, i was capable of, even as a youngster, (good or bad) that set me on a course that constantly stimulated and pressed everything in life,... into..... an adventure for me,even to this current day...and I must say.....certainlya full, great life....no question.....and yours can be too!

Adventures, that have had there scary moments, as well, of course, as well as its awesome moments.....guns, knives, machetes, and frightening moments awaited us, as well as fantastic euphoric momentsso.....a life of fantastic adventures awaited us (good or bad).....and

Of course, naturally,... all will be revealed, as you read on!!!

Bills Story

Bill

Bill Grocott.....a good friend of mine, grew up as a severally impeded youngster, in the environment of a foster-care home, and even though he speaks well of the place, we know that its always difficult to replace the family dynamic, that so many of us have been fortunate enough to experience

One would think, that he would definitely, have a chip on his shoulder, or would at least, approach life, with an obvious....feeling of disadvantage.....

But, that's not the way he sees it,no....not at all

At 50yrs of age (when I last saw him), and his obvious love of life, that has stayed with him, throughout the years.....thrives on..... (like I do).....on.....

The surprise of the unexpected,..... difficulties..... and the challenges of life, that he himself has orchestrated, or unknowingly fallen into,and they just continue, don't they,....with all of us, as a constant daily experience.....good or bad

For instance , when I last saw him,..... he was about to embark on an outback journey,... deep into the Simpson Desert (in Western Australia) for a few weeks...as an outback experience, that he was looking forward to.

bit like this

From what I gather, talking to him,.....is that,.....life, with all its complexities, challenges and difficulties,....even from a young age, were merely just another notch to put on his belt, as he overcame them,..... or flowed with them or saw them, as an opportunity to improve himself, or elevate his knowledge of skills, to the point of endless successes ,..... even tho, it often, may not have seemed that way to others.....but it certainly did to him.

Life was nothing but a challenge to him....and an opportunity, and experience, to be in other people's shoes...(so to speak)

When I last saw him, he had lost his 30 yr old son to cancer, so he was not without his challenges too....

Mikes story

Mike has not been without his challenges either.....current severe arthritis, inflammation, and swelling in the legs, a knee replacement that has reached its 'use by' date.....both knees causing difficulty,legs constantly burning,incontinence of the bowel and urinary tract, prostate problems.....severe reflux,.....open heart quad bypass surgery,water on the lungs, asbestosis of the lungs,Parkinson's disease,....allergy and sinus issuesand many more.....like slurring speech and balance problems, etc

.....so I am not talking from an uneducated perspective.....I am also talking from the 'school of hard knocks' as well

But don't you see.....this is another fantastic opportunity, for me to learn,.... to overcome, and to see this, as just another adventure,..... and to experience what its like to live, in the Parkinsons, negative, auto immune disease world, that many have to live thru,and

be there to be a help, or to find a cure or relief, or exercise empathy, and this was, and still is, my attitude to life....What an opportunity,,.....what a challenge.....

Of course....i didn't chose this disability, but imé dam well not going to let it rule me either...I'll do everything I can to beat this cursed thing....even if I die trying,...ha!

Just another adventure to experience.....and hopefully overcome

You see,... were often saying to others...."oh yea, if you were in my shoes, you wouldn't be so blas'e about it all"

Well.....guess what....

We are in your shoes,.....or close to it!...and I see this nothing more thanas an opportunity.....and even tho there may be many negatives along the way.....'life is always a risk' but if we see everything as adventure..... opportunities can be sour or fantastic cant they !.....so just go with the flow....if you want your life to be filled with adventure

So adventures can often take us down the wrong path as well, cant they!

Of course, pain and suffering for people is definitely, 'none of our end', or 'course' along the way thru life that we would desire,.....but if you find yourself in a position, that is of your doing, or not of your doing,.....or if you aren't totally incapacitated (like millions aren't), then look for a way to deal with your problem, so that you might give hope to others, or at least, help alleviate their burden by your personal positive experience

Young days

Even at the age of three, I was aware that there were different ways of approaching life' as I saw my Aunty, (who lived with us)..... at 33, die of throat cancer in front of me,.....unable to talkso even at that young age I was aware of the uncertainty of life, and that this life is just with us, for a fleeting moment (so it seems).....well, I certainly remember that well anyway (even as a 3yr old).....and I guess, from that moment, it somehow, shaped my future,.....because everything from that day, I put everything in the basket of,...just 'experience' this short life, while you still have it.....and so came the individuality that I have commonly labelled with

From that moment on, my awareness of my self-contained lifestyle emerged, and as I was often given the privilege and trust of my loving parents, to amuse myself, (which I loved)

and, still in the 1940s...as a 3 yrs old.....saw myself cycle (on my little 3 wheeled trike).....5 miles to my brothers school, peddling fast on my little trike.....down the main road, thru the park, over bridges, crossing roads.....and when the police, and my distressed Mum finally found me, after 4 hours of city-wide radio and police abduction alert broadcasts, (Auckland, New Zealand),

I was finally found.....outside my brothers school.....pleading ..”I jus wanted to see my bwover” (brother)....ha!.....and so, my future was set, as my Mum ‘so knowingly’ discerned that day.....and from that day never impeded me in any way.....knowing that adventure and fortune would surely fall my way (good or bad).....i just needed to take it with both hands.....and that has certainly happened in the last 70 years

She was not at all surprisedwhen I jumped off the house roof at 5 yrs of age, and my ‘bed linen-sheet’ parachute failed to open,as she had now, become accustomed to my crazy antics.....and broken legs and such, were just a part of the whole adventure in those days

Climbing trees (we’ve all done it....my generation at least), rugby, trolley carts, riding bikes, and the unusual experiences,...like the time I was playing outside as a 6 yr old and suddenly the sky went dark, and 100 million bees (no exaggeration).....1 mile long swarm, darkened the skies,..... and at least 2 or 3,000 landed on me,..... and I was 3 inches thick with bees over my entire body....Mum screaming at me thru the closed window“don’t move Mike”.....”don’t move Mike”.....

bit like this again....not me!

They were in my ears , up my nose, and I was well aware then, that one panic move would be my last,.....so i stood perfectly still for an hour, until they finally departed,

Now.... being well aware that the unfortunate,can also fall upon you very quickly indeed, as by this experience,.....and now knowing that, your reaction, will often determine the outcome (good or bad),..... I was gratefulthat I had operated with the correct outcome

I realised, that this is a learned response....and that I had learned recently (then), of a not so positive result, and that panic movements could be fatal.....hence, my reaction

Gaining information, and hands on experience are so valuable, and will cause us to asses each situation with wide-open eyes, and clear judgment

A self belief is also essential for success.. and self belief will only comes from involvement

I am saturating myself with current information even at 74, and am finding there is not enough time in each day.....even in my current difficult health condition, that I am in

I have a current operating business, and am currently starting 2 new ones.....have started 36 businesses in my lifetime and have had many scaryand euphoric moments (more on that later)..... But maintain a very restful, calm and peaceful existence.....as many would agree.....including my 3 beautiful daughtersbut am known to many, ‘as the man who’s done everything’(their vocalisation, not mine)

But it all comes down to participation and information

Don't think that you will always succeed.....of my many businesses , many have flopped.....

i have been wealthy and I have also been homeless.....I have currently very little, i'm now renting, but i'm very very happy ...They should give honours (like Academy awards).....to those that just 'have a go' shouldn't they!

You simply, (like I did,...many, many times)join the unfortunate 60% group of failed entrepreneurs.....

But have you noticed,... that human beings, just ... get up, shake off the dust, and have a go at something else, be it employment, or entertainment (basking), or starting another business, or even inventing necessary things.....that we never would have thought of, if life hadn't been hopelessly against us....red cross work, health work, works of compassion,...and endless other community support networks.....volunteer first, (if you are financially able)...then just see what will open to you....just Be the best, and you will always excel.....as I'll prove, further into my story

I was destitute in a country, at a time when financial handouts were unavailable (a failed business once again.....in Apartheid South Africa) and in 1973.....with 2 little children, and us not being citizens,...'out on the streets, was literally just days away for us'as we ate flour pancakes all week, topped with tomato sauce....because...that's all that we had left

I walked the streets intensely,until finally found a job as a taxi driver, working night shift, down on the docks of Cape Town.....taxi servicing the merchant seamen, late at night, and also afternoons on the Cable car

MikeDusk Taxi driving....Table

Mountain Cable car....Capetown

Didn't know the streets (no GPS then...ha!).....you had to memorize where you were...and where were the best pubs, where were the best brothels, night clubs and entertainment and, often you would spend hours just sitting in the brothels, talking to the prostitutes, as your fare would hire you for the evening..... And 'boy'(the girls were pleasant girls),.... But man, did they have a 'tough side' to them.....knife fights.....(in the kitchen).....was a regular occurrence, as they accused one another of stealing one another's clients.

The cruise ships,.... which we also serviced,with several thousand passengers embarking monthly, would also hire a taxi for the evening often,..... but due to the instability of the day (Nelson Mandela ANC Apartheid era of 1974)..... passengers would often find themselves in sticky and life threatening situations,.... as they simply, just walked down the street.....screw-driver in the back (kidneys), and bag snatching,.... Was a common occurrence.....

One evening , on the wharf, the taxi driver in front of me jumped out of his still moving taxi..... jumped up on the truck in front of him,started punching, (with road rage) the truck driver in front of him, meanwhile the taxi continued hurtling down the wharf... no

driver.....and tourists in the back....dont know where it ended up.....may have gone over the edge.....sheeeesh.....it was like the wild west

Today you could be an 'Uber' driver I guess.....but,.... be the best.....and just see what happens!!!!

But ime getting ahead of myself

At the age of 7, I had an experience, that profoundly changed my assessment of life, and opened the door for me to understand more about our complex existence...and that some things would be unexplainable,..... but true, never-the-less

I was visiting my grandmas house for the first time....took a so called 'romantic' steam train to... (Otahuhu Auckland NZ 1953) was awesome.....

bit like this.....'K'

class...awesome times

and as I was to bed down for the night (in the lounge), when my Mum said to me, "Mike, don't be disturbed, if you hear a loud knock on the front door at precisely midnight, and the door will start shaking"

Sure enough, as the clock struck midnight, there was a loud knocking on the front door, which was also shaking from intensity of the knocking.....I saw and heard it very plainly, but was not disturbed at all, simply by the casual and ho-hum way that Mum had informed me

Being a 7 yr old, I assumed this was normal, or possibly a trick from the neighbours,.....so next midnight I hid in open view of the outside of the front door, and to my surprise,as I watch the door shaking with loud knocking,..... No one was there

On the third night, at precisely midnight again, as I heard knocking, I opened the door quickly, in the hope of catching someone..... no one there

On the fourth night, I was over it, and just told whoever, to "shut up, im'e trying to get some sleep".....oh the naivety of a 7 yr old

But one thing it did do,was awaken me to the possibility of a fourth (or more) dimensions.....which in the early 1950s, anything was a possibility, and I was to go on, (like others in my generation), in future years, to experience many astounding things.....first object in space, microwaves, washing machines, juke box's, hot rods, rock and roll, milk bars, and many countless other amazing new things.....so, the thought of another dimension (in the light of all this creativity) seemed quite reasonable to me.....as a 7 yr old

When I turned 8..... We moved from Auckland, 2 hours north, to where my Dad built a tearooms on an isolated mountain range (Brynderwyns NZ).....and we continued to live there for the next 15 years

Dad built this house on the Brynderwyn Ranges,
NZ....with no prior knowledge of building

We had bought an acre off the close-by farmer neighbour (and apart from them, the nearest neighbour was 5 miles away).....and he owned 6000 acres on these ranges.....i had a horse, and would roam, by myself, across the terrain, regularly, find waterfalls, trek through the bush, build tree huts, and was often found in the woolshed helping my farmer friends....(nothing in the bush could hurt you in the bush in those days.....possums and rabbits ..that's about it)

I could see both coasts on a clear day'50 miles in any direction, while sitting by myself on the top of a waterfall.....at 10 yrs of age, I found this exhilarating and often euphoric,....and as, one particular day, a thick cloud bank settled over the valleys, blue sky above, and the only thing visible above the cloud bank.....was our house.....(you felt as if you could walk across the cloudbank).... a very trippy moment for a 10 yr old

my view from

my window

Teenager

My Mum and Dad were always busy in the tearoom (much to my independent delight) and life was fantastic for me.....my Dad bought me a rifle (1950s remember),i made sleds and trolleys, and bow and arrows, and tree huts, and just loved my independent life, and was profoundly appreciative of my independent upbringing(sometimes, all we need is a genuine squeeze hug.....which I got daily.....and thats all I needed).....life was great

Sadly, unlike a lot of the testimonies I hear today,..... the difficulties of modern day living, bullying, rejection, insecurities is certainly troubling,.....but....however, i was the opposite

Captain of the rugby team, excelled at sport, very popular,.....but at the same time,.....fiercely independent and confident, (due to my upbringing),even thou I had a very 'below average' IQ of 89yes,... below average, and very poor education (as this world labels education)..... But I saw my education, (and always have),.....as hands on education,.... 'have a go' education..... lifestyle education

Mike..... 12 yrs old

This essentially came about by just volunteering my services to people, helping people, being of service to people as a young person.....as I did on the farm next door...mustering sheep, drenching sheep, working in the woolshed, building fences, cattle drives, and even driving a bulldozer on the farm ,..... at a young age , washing dishes, stoking up the wood burning

stove, and making pies and scones, in the tearooms as well!...which is a great learning platform, and opens up unknown avenues for you, that you didn't think you were ever capable of

The day I turned 15,.....right in the middle of my School Certificate exam.....did not have a clue what I was doing in the exam, so promptly walked up to the teacher in the middle of the exam, and quietly said 'bye bye' and went out to the main road....hitched to the beach and went surfingand never went back to school

Mike at 15

My poor education was due to a series of events that would shape my life.....that you would consider it as a disadvantage today..... but I saw it as great learning experiences, and never saw it as perhaps as the world views it today.....to me it was simply a challenge..... and I was ready for the challenge

I have an older brother and sister (as I mentioned).....My sister, after 1 year at my school, was sent to boarding school in Auckland with my brother, to continue their education

The school bus used to come up the mountain, for my sister and myself for that 1 year, but were adamant that, such a long climb, up the mountain, for 1 pupil was not on the cards....so my Dad and the education Dept. did not see eye to eye.....in fact, he refused to take me down the mountain to catch the school bus, and they refused to drive up.....so we had a stalemate.....i was 11 at the time

I suggested a push -bike.....and my Dad agreed, and for my last 4 years at school, had a ball.....bit slow going up, but awesome fun going down the hill (on the main road)often, as fast as a car.....awesome fun.....(no helmets in those days...ha!)

my 1950s brylcreem slick-back Fonzy hair..... blowing in the wind (I think you need to be 40+ to understand that....ha!) with my school bag strapped to my back

The 'Fonz'

In the winter in NZ, it tends to get dark fairly early,....and if it was raining (as it often did), many times I got home well after dark....in the rain....no lights....but boy those petrol tankers were easily to grab a hold of, and tow you up the hill.....and besides,...the car following behind me,. With their lights on, was an added bonus

When I would walk in the door after dark, bedraggled and all wet, Mum would just say 'hi Mike', a quick hug, and back to cooking, steaks, chips, eggs, pies, busy, busy, busy,

They didn't even know it was dark...bless their hearts...love them to bits...

At 13 I got a double puncture on my bike, but only had 1 puncture repair unit, so was unable to patch both punctures Consequently, I just simply walked down the drive, stuck my

thumb out, and hitch-hiked to school for the remaining 2 years.....not one person, in 2 years, (up and down) was anything other than gracious to me (remember this was the early 60s, late 50s)

Down the drive and stuck my thumb out

If I had to wait to long for a ride.....i would simply , give school a miss, and go straight to the my local surfclub, and go surfing..... (it was worth the strap at school the next dayfor truancy ...ha!)

We were not a particularly wealthy family.....isolation meant, creating your own power (generator), providing your own water, phone, and many other inconveniences, but I was so proud of my Dad and Mum,.....just.... 'having a go'... which, I would have to say, set me up for my future

When I was 14, I was given a hand me down car, which was common practise among Dad and his close brothers.....a 1948 Hillman,... with cable brakes (not hydraulic brakes)with dodgy wiring, etc,and consequently went about re-wiring and totally restoring that old car (simply by trial and error)at 14 yrs of age

1962.....The Hillman with my 15 yr old mate

Wayne (long time deceased)

I got my licence at 15

At 15 I thought I was all grown up.. ha!

Left home the week I turned 15.....and was hitch-hiking around the shores of another country at 16.....with my trusty surfboard under my arm.....started surfing in 1959, and little did I know that I would travel and surf, often big waves....all around the world for the next 60 yrs, including many other spectacular things, that only my upbringing would make me confident enough to accomplish

Mikebig Raglan, New Zealand....no

leg ropes.....40lb boards 1963

.....however, your upbringing may have been somewhat different,.....but as i shared in 'Bills' upbringing in the beginning of this book,inconvenience is no recipe for defeat or lack of adventure...it ends up being your choiceand I, like you, chose adventure

15 yr old Mike.... 1962....surfing his favourite

spot.....Pataua NZ

Growing up

Upon leaving school.....i found myself.....6 months working at a retail sports counter... as counter salesman....followed by 6 months as a brickies labourer, and that made me realise that diversity would be invaluable to me, as I contemplated travel, and also was aware that, diversity majorly increased my general confidenceand it will yours!

I was so proud of my granddaughter and grandson, going on rigorous training camps, etc, recently, also, knowing that this type of experience will majorly boost their confidence levels

Just get out and about.....you'll learn so much

1960s

The mid 60s was an awesome time....man on the moon.....the beatles.....air travel now recognised as common place.....

and as we all did.....became environmentally and health conscious.....and individualism was born

also..... a lot of our generation had been hard-core smokers

As I would often stay at a rural friends place in the 1950s, for a couple of days or so.....they would often be asked to march the cows, early to the cowshed, during the dark of a cold winters morningand they, and myself, would often be found with a roll-your-own fag hanging out of our mouths, slushing thru the mud in our gumboots.....at 13 yrs of age.....

15 yr old Mike....with a fag hanging
out of his mouth

and our Dads were simply not fussed at all....in fact often, offered us a light

Why is it, that smoking was so acceptable in the 50s

.....well, if you had of just fought a world war, and the prospect of getting killed.....im'e telling you....your not worrying about the health consequences, when your about to be blown-up.....you want to calm your nerves.....And that's why many smoked during the war.....and most continued smoking after the war.....and if you did it.....its natural that your kids will follow.....hence the relaxed opinion of smoking in the 50s, and there was no health consciousness, like there is todayi wonder if you would start smoking to calm your nerves, if WW3 broke out!!.....just a thought!!..... makes us a little more compassionate and understanding dosen't it!.....and not so judgemental of our previous generation

Speaking of war..... my 3 year older brother was called up for National Service , for a year ..at that time, and I was to follow shortly after.....fortunately, they reduced it to a month, and saw me at Papakura Military Camp, for that short period,.....

I had been a Corporal and Bugler in cadets and that just continued

Machine guns (bren guns), 303 rifles, live grenades.....and tank warfare , was really exhilarating...but as they were looking for volunteers to the escalating Vietnam war,.... and as I certainly didn't like getting up at 5 o'clock in the freezing cold, showering, perfect bed making, polishing everything spotless.....naturally I declined, but I would find myself close to conscription in Australia in later years.....many of my friends were conscripted to Viet Nam, and I often wondered whether I had done the right thing...as a ' conscientious objector' later on

Viet Nam war

At that time there was freedom of movement between Australia and New Zealand.....like one country

When I wanted to go to Australia, I just simply jumped on a plane or ship and stayed in Australia as long as I wanted...no questions asked.....it was awesome.....and from 1964 thru to 1970 saw me spending the summer in NZ and the winter in Australia....surfing of course.....Noosa Queenslandour winter hot spot.....i don't even think we had passports then...just our drivers licence.....and empty waves.. I might add.....not many surfers around in '64-69'.....all to ourselves

'Johnsons' Noosa, Australia

1968.....just us guys out

Of course, I had many and varied jobs,....(as did everyone else).....from working in an abattoir (sheep and cattle slaughterer house...yuk.. blood everywhere)...brickies labouring.....gantry crane driving at the Kawerau timber mill NZ..... To Southern Sydney Oyster farming,.....40ft up on a rope ladder (at Kawerau mills, with my friends swinging the rope ladder was no doubt my first really scary moment)

Of course I worked at surfboard factory, and one stage shaped and built my own boards and worked with fibreglass often

made these in

Capetown.....specifically for Jeffries Bay

Worked for the Railways in Sydney for a short stint.....built plaster 15000 gallon farmers water tanks...and as the late 60s was coming to a close (at 19yrs of age),... saw myself attracted to partnership with a colleague as I investigated a 'dunny cart' job (pumping out 'outdoor toilets' in Queensland)...which many of my friends were doing ...

and he (my colleague) assumed that I was a bricklayer (maybe I made it sound like that Ha!), and offered me a partnership building a retirement village,of which I accepted (of course,..i had no idea what so-ever what I was doing) but quickly got in the swing of things by just copying my colleague and pretending that I knew what i was doingand after about a month, as I became more confident(hallelujah for libraries.....no google

then..ha!).....i felt confident enough to employ some of my surfing friends...who were scared witless at the thought of using a hammer.....I said, ‘dont worry Billy.....just pretend like you know..ha!’

me surfing mate Billy.....Noosa

1968

And 50 years later (last year 2020) I get this email from the same.....Billy, now 70 (and has been for 50 yrsa builder....since that time)

email

Anyway, I started thinking, how did I get to this? And Mike Cooney came to mind. Tewantin 1968 working as a blockies labourer. Now I'm my own labourer, still working on that first \$mill. It's great so thanks Mike. I'll have to think of something else to do sometime but until then it's just one more adventure in ... you know the rest.

*Cheers
Billy*

Very sobering to know that you were majorly involved in someone's destiny

Confidence

In Tewantin 1968, it was just a short stint, stayed only a few months with my retirement village building colleague,finally, left my colleague partner (as friends),.... because the call of the NZ surf was beckoning me once again,.....and one day, when I finally I returned to New Zealand,.... An Aussie mate and I were looking at the surf in NZ....

When an old man came up to us.....whom I knew..... And said he was going to build a motel.....

I told him that I was in the building industryand he said to me,.... did I know of any good builders (I was around 19)i looked at my 20 yr old policeman surfer friend who.....had never picked up a hammer in his life (sound familiar).....and quietly said to him “wanna build a motel Ken”he nodded his head

The old man said “how much”

I looked at Ken and whispered “how much will it cost to live at Noosa and surf for 6 months.....and a car, and rent”

Ken...Noosa 1966

About \$6000 we agreed,then said to the old man....’you be the Owner/builder, and well build it labour only for \$6000’and to my utter surprise.....he agreed

In March 2018.....I took Ken and his wife, back to that very spot in the sandhills where we made the agreement, (1968) told her the story, and turned her around....and said’’and there it is....still there’’ 50 yrs later.....’’there’s the motel’

Motel 2018

And Ken went on to pursue a lifelong career in the building industry, Ken operating one the best stone masonry businesses in the state,.....which he still works in, and operates today.....at 76.....and still surfs, I might add

Some of Kens recent work

Don’t worry...everything was all quite legal then,....as long as you didn’t call yourself a registered builder and complied with the (often visiting) local building inspectors rules, you were legitimate.....in his eyes

I tell you,... the local library saw me sitting there10 hrs day...7 days a week....for 2 weeks, learning how to build a motel ..and what all the funny squiggles and so on.. on the plans meant...ha!

We always operated within the lawall of the time...

These were also the days of fast cars, hot rods, car modifications, and reshaped cars,.....there was no hard and fast rules, as to their roadworthinessas long as you had a warrant, which was easy to getso we were all busy doin up our cars...

I had an FJ Holden that I modified greatly,,,...bigger motor, lowered, fat wheels, twin headlights, bucket seats, floor shift,and a great big double mattress (thru to the boot) and cushions, wine cabinet, super duper stereo, blinds.....and candle holders.....need I say more ..ha!.....

also started another business at that timebuilding stereo systems, as my interest in hi-fi was stimulated, after building a car stereo system....timber speaker cabinets and turntable plinth, kit set amplifiers.....was cool fun.....did it again in South Africa.....sold heaps...everyone wanted a good turntable stereo then (for vinyl records)

Mike and Paula start building stereos...Capetown, South

Africa 1973

Revolution

1966 was a very pivotal time in history....a new revolution hit town (NZ).....the hippie movement had arrived at our shores, and I was one of the first to put up my hand, as their philosophy and culture certainly seemed to resonate with me

Long hair identified you,...and there seemed to a certain dress code

You know it amazes me how history gets twisted....i guess according to the one who tells the story,.....and the assessment of the hippie generationis somewhatvery negative these days, which certainly, couldn't be further from the truth

The weird hippie drug culture....as its known as today, which really surprises me, ...because the pure greeny movement came out of hippiedom....save the Whales ..save the trees....anti-nuclearwater pollution control....anti Vietnam and many other world changing events that society supports today.....came from the hippie revolution

And did you know,..... that the pure hippie revolution was actually drug free..... in fact it was the opposite of the drug culture.....completely healthy and totally drug free

Mike and Paula on the hippie

trail

Let me explain.....

When I joined the hippie movement in '66.....we lived a very clean life.....clean drug free living was paramount in the beginning of the movement.....kibbutz, communal living was encouraged ...grow your own organic veggies (& clean surfing)

yoghurt, topped with wheatgerm, and clean living was majorly encouraged.....i saw, visited, and often stayed at a kibbutz.,, for an entire year or more, and no drugs

but where it went wrong....was not the hippies fault, but rather.....the music industry of the time (which I heard the guilty plea, from a prominent musician of the time, recently)

problem was, that the hippies loved their music (hence Woodstock), and the influence of musicians and music, turned psychedelicas was clearly displayed by the Beatles and their Indian influence of their musicalong with the music of the dayJimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Jefferson Airplane, The Who, The Doors, Beatles, Santana and so on.....

Beatles did a huge turn around....late1960s

But also the hippie movement was kinda cosmic, and spirituality mushroomed also,.....and a higher plane, was often pursued by religious or spiritual means.....peace, love, kindness was often viewed,.. as being enlightened

So the more enlightened you were...the more you were one with nature.....so it seemed

Mike...2nd top right...Catholic

School...Auckland NZ

I had been a good Catholic Alter boy, and Choir boy in my day, and went to a school with Nuns.....however, over the last so many years, became sceptical about many things (just like you).....but I must say,..... spiritual awareness was stimulated in me once again.....as I cast my mind back to the door knocking saga, once again, when I was 7 yrs oldremember!

And Hari Krishna, being the flavour of the day, among the hippiesseemed to make sense.....

My friend Ken was also on the enlightenment trailNepal 1970.... as were a lot of people in those soul-searching days

So I became a dedicated Hari Krishna convert.....shaven heads and orange robes were seen amongst us.....and chanting and singing, sitting lotus fashion on the pavement, and passing out 'tracts' in the main street of Auckland (Queen st) became our regular pastimeand I became a majorly dedicated convert

However, at the same time,my surfing brother seemed to be following the Buddhist trail,and after a year, I began questioning as to whether other religions, may have something to offer as well, and began to modify my current believing.....and swing more to Buddhist philosophy.....

finally in 1970, and now as a fully committed Buddhist transidental meditation convert.....the Far East and Nepal, and those sort of spiritual destinations, were constantly on our minds.....and many were found travelling East...

Me surfing mate 'Ken' Nepal

...Himalayas...1970

We also were very food conscious, Buddhist Macrobiotics (yin-yang) became our mandate also.....as was my wifesbeing recently married, and both very dedicated, and keen to traveland so,...started an unbelievable 5 year travel experience

We wouldat one stage, majorly experience the religion of Islam on our travels, as found ourselves, for some time ...in the Islamic North African countries of Cameroon, Niger, Algeria, Nigeria, and Morocco, and were very impressed at the dedication we saw.....once again....contemplating our spiritual options.....especially when I saw their dedication, as the Minarets would chant out prayer calls, and even the buses and vehicles would stop in the street,people would get of their buses, unroll their prayer mats on the dirt roads, and pray....5 times a day

During the month of the fast of Ramadan, even the entire country, was dedicated.....I was majorly impressed.....

1972 Nigeria.....very impressive Mosqueall dirt roads then.....friendly people

But a year later,I would find myself returning to my Christian roots going hard,....like I always seem to, but in a place of rest at the same time.....believe it or not!!

Ordained twice , in 2 denominations, involved in starting 2 churches, built a church, started a bible school and taught in it for 5 years, 4 yrs a Childrens Pastor, ran 8 Home Groups, 2 mens groups, wrote 4 books, Elder, Deacon, and a Youth Pastor of 6 years with 600 youth....Disc

Jockeying often in our youth Nite venue we created.....and constant Youth camps, driving our full size bus that we obtained

All while I was working a building business full time.....doing and working an 8 hour day....and running a business with up to 10 employees.. including doing our own accountancy, plans, quoting, and also starting a second businesshouse washing (Chemwash franchise)

For some reason..... I seemed to somehow, not get rattled and often,.....people remarked, as to whether I was even working at all....and even 'are you on holiday'sheeeeeesh!

1970s

My wife (who smoked as well) and i, went to an Elton John concert in Auckland 1970 ,.....didnt eat all day....smoked 2 packets of cigarettes each.....and on the way home ,and right thru the nite, vomited violently (both of us).....both woke up the next morning, and couldn't stand the sight and smell of cigarettes any more,... and we both gave up the same day....both despising the thought of ever smoking a cigarette again.....fascinating I thought!.....and never have to this day.....

Backtracking a little bit ...1969.....Ken, my surfing friend and motel building colleague, had taken off to South Africa in search of that famous wave (of the time).....Cape St Francis, and ended up at a place called Jeffries Bay.....of which I was to follow

Ken..... Mr Schultz's accomodation for our
mexican friends..... Jeffries Bay 1969

4 of us, heading to Perth (en route to South Africa), that same year, in a trusty old '52 Hillman Minx car,....blew a head gasket in South Australia, so we showed great delight, as we drove it across the paddock, jumped out a full speed,, and watched it hurl over the 100ft coastal cliff into the sea.....oh boy!!!!!!...who'd be young again...sheeeeeesh!

We split up, and then shortly after, I hitchhiked a lift to Perth, and a brand new Ford GT Falcon picked me up,.....the driver and new owner planted his foot, to impress me, missed the corner and we plough at 70 miles an hour, into a tree laden paddock (no seat belts in those days)....hit at least 3 trees...head onbut fortunately they all had been cut at knee height....i felt sorry for the guy, as the gearbox got ripped off the bottom of the car, (as it hit the stumps)...and the diff and sump, and the wheels etc.....oh boy!

I also had a close call in Caloundra Queensland, a year or 2 earlier.....went to the Caloundra pub with some mates, was drinking with them, when they decided to leave early...I was half way thru my beer, so I said that I would get a lift 5 mins later with some other guys....left 5 minutes later, came around the bend to this head-on accident,.....the car was completely unrecognisableall dead....my best mate, with half an arm hanging out the window, cut off at the elbow.....very sobering!!

As I continued on to Perth.....stopped of at Kalgoorliebrought a level and trowel, went to a pub,....told everyone that I was a brickie,.....got a job...lasted one day....'well I tried'

Oh well....you cant win em all....ha!

In Perth I encountered one of the most dangerous jobs around.....a male model.....modelling clothes for 'Eros' fashion designs

We had to pose on the window ledges of an old abandoned building.....in our flared shirts and flared pants....3 stories up standing outside on a brick window ledge... sheeeeeeeesh!stand posing on a white line, in the middle of the main hwy, cars doing 50 miles an hour all around us.....well we got some good photos.... sheeeesh again.....and so on...

Surfing Brother Phil and Mike.....flaired sleeve 'Eros'

fashion designs adorning Mike

When I came home to our flat one evening, and everyone was lying on the floor, spaced out, needles hanging out of their arm's, coke bottles and heroin and LSD everywhere.....I figured it was time to head back to Sydney

Driving across the Nullarbor Desert was an experience and a half....500 miles of unsealed road and constant potholes wrecked my lovely portable record player....and vinyl records I might add.....but we were to experience far more difficult conditions to come..... especially in Africa

exactly like this.....our only

form of music

1971

But it was now time for my wife and I to embark on our fabulous 5 yr travel journey.....(by the way we took a 2 hr super 8 movie of the whole trip ...but have since lost it....sheeeeeesh!.....only got photos now)

Like this.....bummer....

So in 1971... it was decided (as hippies) that Marrakech and Kathmandu, would be part of our current hippie destination..... and 'La Barre' in France and Jeffries Bay, South Africa, part of my surfing destination....

So.....In the winter of 71'.....flew to Sydney.....then the 3 day, 4,400 kilometre Indian/Pacific train across to Perth, West Australia

6 months working in Perth, followed by a freighter trip to Singapore....

going thru the straights of Sumatra and Java saw with glee, some beautiful waves breaking on the Sumatran reefsfinally got back there 30 yrs later

Sumatra30 yrs

later

But, the freighter we were on, had a number of hippie passengers on it, including us,.....with long hair naturally.....and when we reached Singapore, ..the police came on board and arrested the ship..... (which apparently owed 1 mill in docking fees).....

but the other troubling thing was, that the police demanded, that all us hippies, go out on to the top deck.....lined them up in front of a row of chairs.....sat all the hippies down.....put a bowl on their heads..... and promptly cut all their long hair off.....I managed to put my beanie on.....to conceal all my long hair...ha!

Crossing the road the next day.....at a pedestrian crossing.....minus my beaniea Singaporean police pointsman keeps looking at my long hair.....pulls out his gun and points it at my head.....

we take off,freaking out.....and he leaves his duty as a police pointsman,..... chases after us(gun waving around)

We run into a jewellers shop,.....jump over and hide behind the counter.....he runs past

We run into a jewellers shop and jump over the counter!!!!sheeeesh!.....lucky he a was a nice jeweller man!

The next day, visit a Singaporean nite club.....funky music.....but strange....every guy is wearing a beanie.....

when the band came out , so off came the beanies....guess what?...

Everyone (the Singaporeans) had hair, longer than mine ..ha!

Rebellious generation!!!!!!

Mike..Capetown....tucked our hair under our beanie

The next day we were to depart to London via Bahrain.....but the plane that all us hippies were booked on, had apparently been overbooked by 30 people.....

But we complained

so guess what they did....

put us all on the same plane.....30 extra people on a fully booked plane.....

people were sleeping in the isles, in their sleeping bags, you had to climb over them to go to the toilet...ha!

And guess what...this was 1971, and you could still smoke on planes....and there was more than just cigarettes being smoked.....im'e surprised that the pilots didn't get stoned with all the Marijuana smoke that was filling the cabin...it was so thick, that you could hardly see your hand in front of you.....

and we lived to tell the tale.....ha!

smoking on planes

Finally arrive at Gatwick Airport,... London.... depart to Earls Court where all the Kiwis and Aussies hung out, and bought ourselves an old 1959 Kombi sleeper van.....as you do!!

old 1959 Kombi...

And for the next week or so, Putted around London in our comfortable old kombi, pulling up and just sleeping anywhere we wanted (in our van,which you could pull up anywhere, any street,.... and camp for the night, in those days).....

one morningin our pyjamas....we cook bacon and eggssmell drifting out the window of the kombi,.....and much to our surprise....guess where we were!...

Right in front of 10 Downing street....politicians walking past our bacon and eggs smelling kombi.....ha!.....Their front door directly in front of us.....ha

Finally headed down to South Devon...Woolacombe,and met Phil....my surfing brother there.....was nice!!

Phil introduced us to a couple ...John and Di (a South African surfer and his Rhodesian girlfriend), and as we had been in touch with the AA, (Automobile Association) and explained to them where we wanted to go.....

John and Di....our

companions

this particular route, was suggested to usby the AA

to drive from London to Capetown (across the middle of the Sahara).....back up to Dar-es-salem.....across to India....then on to Nepal.....

Wow.....big call....

But John and Di said "we'll come too"....so that settled it for us...

Of course.....not realising the enormity of the adventure, that lay ahead of us.....

the euphoric momentsand the terrifying ones that also lay ahead

The perilous journey

We had no money, so we got to work real fast.....we needed more than \$4000 dollars (according to the AA) to achieve thisgot to work real fast,..... because, the AA suggested to us, that its necessary to leave in early September, to miss the heat of the Sahara summer, and also miss the beginning of the monsoon rains in Central Africa, and now it's April (and we were broke), so heads up, bums down.....7 days a week working....working.....working....well... we did manage to save \$1500.....i wonder if that's enough!!!!

i guess we figured, If we have accomplished half that amount by September, we were doing well.....Paula worked at seaside junk shop....selling souvenirsme at a fish and chip shop.....

we (the staff.. in the fish and chip shop) would sing and sway together, and sing catchy songs ..ha.....get an inch long piece of fish, and put it in the batter, and cook it..... then put it in the batter, then cook it, then put it in the batter.....until it was more than a foot long.....11 inches of batter 'I'll have that one''greedy people ..ha.....but was fun.....but the boss didn't think it was that funny.....but it was to us.....juveniles ..ha

We would cook up some hot chips....put them in a carton....freeze them (still in the carton) in the freezer,.... then sprinkle a few hot chips on top, and sell frozen chips with a few hot ones on topha.....naughty boyshavin a bit of fun.....great days....and happy customers...well...most of them anyway.....ha.....

Can you believe...would go for a surf when I finished at 10pm.....twilight!!!...amazing.....surf til midnight

Decided we needed a new 1200cc motor (dam.....should have got a 1500cc) for the Kombi (and the first leg will be 25,000 kilometers to Capetown).....quite a haul for that little motor

A 25 horse power motor...proved to be (unknown to us) way under powered....and was nearly the death of us many times.....oh boy.....because we weren't aware of the severe terrain that was ahead of us.....

and we were supposed to be 4 wheel drive...according to the AA.....gulp!.....Sahara....yeeeks!in a 2 wheeled drive underpowered KombiAAAAAAAH!....yikes, very scary moments ahead.....

and a travelling companion vehicle is a must....thank goodness for John and Di

building roof racks

Working on the vehicles.....and

We also needed to put on extras,..... and modifications to the kombi also, during this time.....as well as stock up with goodies.....dried food, canned food,multiple water

containers (50 litres), petrol gerry cans (300litres), extended roof racks, sand ladders, tools of all kinds, 4 spare tires, 4 spare innertubes (tires in those days still had innertubes,, which would often be our saving grace) shovels, air horns,.....spare oil, grease, 2 wheel jacks, puncture repair outfits.....bull barsand many small modifications were also necessary, like double air filters, increased air flow vents (air cooled motor), light protectors and warning lights....

However the Gerry cans were unavailable locally.....so the local wreckers yard constantly saw visits from us, and subsequently, 3 loose Kombi petrol tanks would substitute nicely I thought (for the Gerry cans).....bad mistake I was to find out.....

3 Kombi petrol tanks on the
roof racks

4 cheap treadless tires was all i could afford....sheesh what dumb move, and substitute air horns (push bike hooters).....proved a last minute saviour to us

We would also need a extra long aerial, for our shortwave radio, to keep in touch with the scary changing volatile African political climates, and changing weather patterns...a must.. the AA informs us

Both us, and John and Di, our traveling companions ...worked tirelessly to have sufficient money....and competent working vehicles and abundant supplies.....incidentally, both got the old paint brushes out also, to paint the vehicles a more inconspicuous colour.....green for us

get the ol' paint brush out

.....sandy yellow for John(paint brush!!!!!!).....be inconspicuous as possible ...said the AA....wonder why!!.....

KentJohn just hand painted
his yellow.....

we were soon to find out!

Just about ready

Having finally departed South West England....and saying good bye to my brother, ...spent a short time in the New Forest...practising our adventure

On the way to KentNew
Forest....trial run...ha!!

2 weeks apple picking in Kent, (and painting Johns van) and we all were proposing to catch the ferry to France the next daybut

.....tragically John and Di get the horrible news

that some of their African visas had been disapproved..... (understandablyas they were a South African and Rhodesian couple) and this.... has now put a screeching halt to their amazing adventure (and possibly ours).....remember, this is 1972, and Apartheid South Africans (and white people) were despised everywhere in Africa (unbeknown to us....naive NZ kids).....and they would have to find some other way returning home to Rhodesia

Remember independence was rife all over Africa at this time...from white Colonialism,....(was fine in the 1950s, but not so, in the 1960s--or 70s)

and white people were not welcome in Africa(again.....unbeknown to us naive kiwi kids).....

Idi Amin was expelling Asians from Uganda.....

Nelson Mandelas ANC guerilla group was land mining roads in Rhodesia.....

Algeria..... murdering white people was common place.....

Algeriaanti white
feeling....

and we would find ourselves in the country of Morroco as a violent Military coup would be taking place.....shiiite!

South Africa was not the place to be in 1972 either.....

Civil war in the Congo had destroyed all infrastructure

Genocide was about to erupt in Burundi,

and the Vietnam war was in full swing, and the Chinese communist army influence in Africa, was immense and clearly visible.....and also growing strong opposition to the Vietnam war was growing

World wide opposition to the Indo-China Vietnam
war

and now we had to consider whether traveling alone would be viable and wise.... according to the little information we had.....and especially in our inadequate 2 wheel drive underpowered old 1959 Kombi, that was well past its used by date

But in good ol' England, we were naïve to this, and were blissfully unaware of all these African atrocities,..... but soon we would be in the thick of it...no question!

Europe

As we watched John and Di depart on a large ocean liner.....our heads hanging low.....Di yells out to Paula, something somewhat inspiring ,

‘‘ did you hear what she just said’’.....I echoed

‘‘Paula, come and be my bridesmaid in Salisbury in March’’

Hesitating,i finally said.....‘‘yes sireeeee.....lets do it’’

That was really all that we needed.....

‘‘South Africa.....where on our way...yahoo’’

Di yells out to Paula

Where on our way

The next day we find ourselves in France.....driving on the right hand side of the road for the first time

Hit the first roundabout.....went around it the wrong way , and consequently pissing off all the locals, as they scrambled up the curbs....ha!...beepin’ their horns like madman.....cars going up the footpaths..... yiiiikes.....what a start (and nearly the finish for us, as well)ha

The next day we hit one of my favourite beckoning surf spots ‘La Barre’ harbour mouth,and it didn’t disappoint me..... beautiful peaks.....but unfortunately, is no more..... ah progress

Beautiful 'La Barre' left

1969

Encountered a somewhat horrible moment as we played volleyball on the beach.....a rather large fishhook found its way into my big toe....

After unsuccessfully trying to remove it.....found ourselves at the local hospital

Wondered what all the screaming was about.....

i was about to find out.....

as the doctor told me lay face down on the bed.. hold on to the bedhead as tight as you can....and subsequentlygot hold of my big toe.....scapple in hand.....slices right thru to the bonepulls the hook out and starts sowing me up.....

without any sort of anesthetic....no needles...nothing

jeez,... no wonder people were screaming ...I nearly put finger imprints in the ends of those steel bedheads

why no anesthetic?because foreigners don't pay their bills, that's why.....jeeeeeeez!!!

Down to Spain and Portugal.....and on to Gibraltar after beautiful waves in Mundaka and Nazare

A beach in Spain....1972 met Aussie John and friend heading down to Morocco

Hit the North African coast of Ceuta...then on to Moroccobeautiful surf once again,.....then my wife and I headed on to Casablanca, and a Moroccan nightlife experience

Crossing the Straits of

gibraltar.....Africa ahead

Found a dodgy lookin' kind-of a hotel (sort-of) in Casablanca and then, proceeded to climb the internal staircase, as we were ushered up there by the hotel staff..... in this shabby sort-of hotel....

Dodgy lookin staircase like

this

Expecting to find a bar of sorts upstairs.....we instead encounter a room full of Arabic men, (about 20.....no women) all sitting lotus fashion on the floor in an elongated circle with 2 large bubble pipes in the middle of the room.....

Kinda like these....Hubble

Bubble pipes

the musician (bongo drums player), beckons us over to sit next to him.....which we do,but notice that there is only one small window and one narrow door opposite us, as the only exit.....

oh well, were here to have a Moroccan nightlife experience and if this is their experience, so be it!.....

Mike...in a Jelava.....part of the Moroccan experience

The bubble pipe mouth piece kept going around the circleand naturally we always complied, and took a puff at regular intervals.....

But after the first puff,. We noticed that this was clearly more than tobacco, and in Morocco at this time....hashish was quite legal...and in fact, there were many shops that sold hashish, and we did buy some hashish cookies at one time, but were mistaken, into thinking they were just cookies to have with your tea.....no wonder we felt so spaced out and stoned, after gorging ourselves on heaps of cookies all afternoon, and tea....ha!

But back to the story.....and as hours passed by, and everyone continued the smoking of these bubble pipes.....what became clearly noticeable.....was the sneaky looks around the room... ..at my wife

to the point where open discussion (in Arabic of course) and pointing at my wife, became a bit nerve wracking, and of concern.....in fact.....it became so heated,that a fight broke out between 2 men.....

was very disturbing.....especially when they kept pointing at my wife during the heat of the argument

a third Arab joins in, and a scuffle breaks out in the small doorway(which of course, is the only way out)

Yiiiiikes!.... this is getting scary

I whisper to Paula, ‘that we need to make a run for it’

‘you go first and I’ll try and protect you as best I can’

‘When I say gojust run for the door, and just try and push them out of the way.....I’ll be right behind you’

As the argument rose to fever pitch, and I was about to say ‘go’.....suddenly.....

Another man bursts into the room.....pushes everybody out of the way and gesticulates frantically, for us to get out pronto.....

we dive for the door, as the man is in violent confrontation with the other three guys.....bolt down the stairwell.....out to our kombi.....and we were gone.....’man’.....we were shaking all over, as we screeched off down the road.....and vowed never to put our foot on Arab soil again....

However that vow was short lived as we reached the cross roads further north at Rabat and instinctively turned right towards Algiers.....

Meknes, Morocco...1972

thinking to ourselves, that guy who intervened in our hour of need, must have been the manager or security, or the owner.....but boy.....were we thankful for him that evening sheeeesh!.....

but what lay ahead was to be...far more confronting than thisbearing in mind that this (below) is the progress in Africa..even since 1990

Back roads 1972

As we crossed the border into Algeria.....

fear gripped us, as the anti-white sentiment became clearly obvious to us, as we turned on the local short-wave radio (mainly speaking in Arabic of course, but the tone was very revolutionary and aggressive).....

independence from France was relatively new for Algeria

however our fears were allayed, when we came across some Arab kids,.....who were very friendly and even very warm to us..... culminating in (compassionate) Paula, washing out the nits and lice, from the Arab kids hair.....so.....

was a nice moment!!

Paula washing Arab

kids hair

Remember that this was the time of no computers, no GPS, no mobile phones,.....in factthey never even had television in South Africa until 1976.....we were just to follow maps and listen to short wave radio for our information

Listening to short wave radio in the

Kombi.....(and a bit of Elton John...ha!)

We had not followed the advice of the AA.....in going to Algiers first (to stock up).....as we figured country people, may have more accommodating and friendly.....and we found.....that was the case.....

But we were in, unfamiliar back roads.....and were confronted by a somewhat scary and unnerving situation as we moved further south towards the Sahara

Nestling under some small trees we found.....some several hundred meters off the main track south...(very isolatedbut sandy desert type views to the horizon).....

Parked well off the road...only

trees around

We were very sure we were alone (visually we could see nearly 50 miles), so I jumped out of the van and I began practising throwing my Bowie knife into a tree (thought I would bring

along some protection in the form of a Bowie knife..... carrying guns would get you into a lot of trouble at the borders....so that was a no-no).....

sorta like this.....Bowie knife

Paula was cooking dinner, oblivious to the outside world, and completely oblivious to the approaching threat, that was no more than, 5 meters away.....

Paula making dinner in the

Kombi

3 Arab men were sneaking up on the kombi, (sneaking behind trees) as I, some 30 meters away (and obviously, unnoticed by them), continued to watch them from behind a shrub, wondering (with trepidation), what my next move would be.....

as they got menacingly closer to the kombi.....I felt myself, in a panic and desperately wanting to intervene, but was unsure what to do,

When suddenly,..... instinctively.....I rushed at these 3 knife wielding guys.....my bowie knife ...(in a threatening position above my head)...screaming, and yelling blue murder to these guys,..... and, through fright, they all took offrunning for their lives....as this knife-wielding madman pursued them for a moment or two.....then i quickly retreated to the kombi....jumped in the drivers seathoping like hell it would startand hightailed it out of therebouncing all over the show...Paula holding on to the hot pots and pans, as we raced back to the road, with our Arab pursuers once again....in pursuit....it was panic, panic, panic

Travelling down the bumpy dirt track, for another 20 kilometres or so, towards the Sahara..... we finally found ourselves, in another camping spot, that we regarded as ideal, because of its vast isolation, and obvious 360 visual aspects.....and proceeded to stay the night there.....thinking that we have left our dastardly pursuers well behind....and this definitely was the case, as we settled down for the evening in our somewhatuneasy state

Checked regularly for sign of outside movement,..... nothing.....looks good,no..... wer'e definitely alone,..... so finally hit the pit at 11pm after a somewhat terrifying eveningand after a bit of cassette music by Elton John and the Moody Blues (to calm us down somewhat....ha!)..and some (propoganda) short wave radio

One of the many propoganda

stations.....Voice of Islamic Rep of Iran

Finally fell asleep some time later, considering that we still had 20,000 kilometres to go, and still have the 2000 kilometre hostile and unforgiving Sahara Desert ahead of us, big question markshaunted us

Oh.....butso nice to hit the pit...and get some sleep

WHEN SUDDENLY

When suddenly.....around 2am

there was this bashing on the door.....

people yelling and screaming.....

bright lights all around the van,and rocking the van

I had no idea what was going on, and with great trepidation I open the door, only to have a gun shoved up against my head.....and through the bright lights, I could see a jeep with a machine gun mounted on the back, ...aiming at me.....Paula's following me, getting the same treatment

Bit like this

We are made to kneel on the ground.....hands behind our heads, as two men ransack the inside of our kombi and starts throwing everything outside

This is very very disturbing!!!.....

However, I notice that their uniforms are not like conventional army uniforms, but more like possible Algerian police uniforms,..... and as they also seemed to speak French,..... my wife (who spoke a little French), tries to converse with them.....

We eventually work out what's happening as we piece together some words.....and it appears that these are indeed, the local 'gendarme' (policemen).....searching for drug smugglers, drug traffickers,.....the cartel (so to speak)

And of course, we were totally innocent, but still followed them back to the local town.....'Laghouat'...10ks further south, and in convoy,..... at 3am in the morning,and consequently, were heralded into the 'Commandants' office to be interrogated

Surprisingly, the Commandant was quite jovial and compliant...understanding our situation well...and even placed an armed guard around our kombi, who surprisingly was still marching around our kombi, as we awoke...6 hours later

In return for his favour, he pulls out a stamp album, (would you believe)..... shows it to us,... very enthusiasticallyand asks us if we have any New Zealand stamps.....of which we did,...and gave them to him, somewhat willingly, I might add

This was a very small town, with a large 10ft high, barbed wire fence all around the police compound, and they still felt it was necessary to place an armed guard around us,sheeeeeesh!!

We continued on our way, in the morning, but not without a stern warning from the Commandant, that we may find ourselves in a perilous situation,

“if you continue south, they will take everythingeven your motor while your sleep”

.....a somewhat of an unpleasant parting gesture...I must admit.....but it had as ring of truth about it...unfortunately

Sahara

The road continuing further south .. had obviously, dramatically deteriorated..... By and large, because, the country of Algeria had been in civil war, for the last 10 years, and infrastructure, clearly, had been sadly neglected.....the road south (track) was getting seriously third world....and we hadn't even reached the Sahara proper yet.....

Locals working on the hairy road,
towards the Sahara

we were bouncing around everywhere, and a little further south, we were about to experience the full impact of these dodgy roads, with possible dire consequences.....

When we reached the outskirts of our last town, 'Ghardaia' .. and the roads had deteriorated considerably more,

Ghardaia.....Our last Algerian town
before the Sahara

we had the unfortunate experience of the kombi showing major signs of 'calling it a day' So to speak.....with the wooded roof rack I made, falling to pieces, the kombi's rear springs looking awful like their about to break,.....with all that weight on them

The baldish old tyres (that I could only afford) were showing serious signs of old age inflexibilityas they began to split everywhere.....(thank goodness we still had inner tubes in those daysthat you put inside the tyres)

And a large crack developed across the middle of the kombi threatening to break it in half.....

But all these things were fixable,.....

except what my wife was about to lay on me!!!!

With around nearly 20,000 kilometres to go, I am told....

And was certainly not expecting this.....

That she thinks she may be.....

“3 months pregnant”

Ime gobsmacked.....

we have just come over the worst road possible with 2,000 kilometres of Sahara ahead of us....and who knows what lays beyond.....

and im'e thinking that the possibility of a miscarriageis very very real.....and in the middle of the Sahara...guuuulp!

Especially considering the declaration, that we knew that we had to make, at the Algerian border post further south...(more on that later).....was very scary

But the pressing point at this very moment, was, the necessary repairs to the kombi.....as this was the last town, as we headed for the Sahara

A few screws fixed the roof rack.... And fixing up the tyres was elementary...especially easy with innertubes

The rear suspension was a little harder.....

converting our newly acquired heavy foreign shock absorbers, to fit the kombi.....but the split in the central bodywork was of more concern, but was finally repaired, bolting on a long horizontal steel plate, and also we initially wondered why the timber supports were there....now we knowhopefully these would compensate

horizontal steel plate

(bracket)

Horizontal timber supports and

steel bracket

We continued to head south...with the thought in the back of our minds, that an accompanying vehicle might turn out be a good option...but there was no other vehicle heading south, even after 3 days of waiting for someone, while doing repairs at 'Ghardaia'

so it appeared to be somewhat of 'wishful thinking,' as we headed towards the last fuel stop for over 2000ks, and then, slightly further on, the isolated border post,which was kinda scary...especially regarding the current Algerian border rules (and as I mentioned earlier,..... more on that later)

The last petrol stop was such a sleepy little, kind-of, Sahara petrol station, with noticeably highly inflated fuel prices..... and we were to get over 300 litres (according to the AA), to make it to the next fuel pit stop (a 44 gallon drum, so we were told....nearly 2000ks further on).....

Our last petrol stop before the Sahara

One little building (our so called petrol station)...stuck out in the middle of nowhere.....and the tiny little border post, 20ks further on, even far more isolated and eerymade you

question the validity of this trip.....and when I was filling up with petrol, I somehow fell short in my fuel consumption calculations.....we were over 80 litres short (the 4 kombi petrol tanks....3 on the roof rackconsumed 60 litres ..NOT 80m litres, like I was told).....hence 80 litres short ..and no possibility of us buying any containers here.....but I assumed that a 2 wheeled drive, 25hp kombi, would consume far less fuel than the AA calculated (bearing in mind...their calculation was based on a 4 wheeled drive 70 hp vehicle.....with way more fuel consumption than us).....

I think we might just have enough...I figuredbut I also figured this is gonna be real close.....

bit scary

But our biggest concern, was running out of money, having only \$1100 US dollars left,..... and well over \$3000 was recommended by the AA at this stage of the trip.....anyway

Did a thorough 2 hour check of the kombi..... looks all in order.....

‘what the helllets do it’were sure not going to turn back now.....was the cry of the day..... from the both of us I might add

And off we motored..... heading off to the lone border hut, some 20ks south.....and many countless unbelievable, scary & mindblowing experiences...I might add.....

Border

The border hut was as we expected....about the size of a small shed.....and that was it (desert all around...as far as the eye could see).....nothing else.....

bit kinda like this

not even any sign of transport for him.....and it was a tin shed.....and 50 degrees Celsius outside.....and somewhat unbearable inside

We hand him our passportsstamps themthen proceeded to hand us the Algerian Statuary of Declaration form ..which we knew was to follow (and still have, it to this day)

Original Sahara crossing certificate.....see close-up on
Biography photos

This declaration, is a declaration that absolves the Algerian Govt from any intervention ...should calamity, hostility, or any such unfortunate incident befall us, during our 2000 kilometre Sahara crossing.....in other wordsif you get lost, or worse, and you don't make it to the other end.....we aint comin lookin for you..... your on your own.....'sign here'!!

And we were given a 1 month legal time period permit to do the crossing.....

(By the way.....this the same route, that the inauguration 'Paris to Dakar' rally would use, nearly a decade into the future.....and they would have serious backup...we were alone...just Paula and i....gulp!)

Serious support vehicle, for Paris to Dakar rally

2009

(you see, even though, the actual Algerian border was still 1500 kilometres further south, the access border point was actually in the north of the Sahara).....you would not find any indication of a border 1500 kilometres south....just desert).....anyway.....time to go!!

Scary

We drove across to the track markers pointing southcontemplating whether we were doing the right thing or not

Stopped motionless for a moment

Smiled at the border official.....and one another!

Then we slowly moved off, with just a row of rocks to followat this stage.....

About to cross 'The Sahara'....one set of wheel tracks....and temporary row of rocks

lucky if these row of rocks go another 10k ...I pondered....I wonder what's after that?.....we had no idea!!!

And so, as we waved to the border guardand of course, contemplating that,..... we were alone, and my wife 3 months pregnant....serious troubling doubts kept flooding our minds.....

as we drove off.....into the unknown

but after about 20 minutesand the border post gone from view, and desert all around....euphoria hits you....'wow were crossing the Sahara Desert'
.....'unbelievable'.....exhilaration and excitement sets in....

all alone

which never leaves you.....even as far as to Capetown

We continued on, some 150ks south, and began to climb, and drive along a flat mountainous rock plateau, some 40ks long and more than 300ft high.....you drive up, along,... then down the other sidethere are many of these mountainous plateaus that we would negotiate during our Sahara trip

plateau's

everywhere

But, as we were about 20ks into our first plateau experience, we decided to stop for the night,.. as the hypnotic mirages, in the distance, began to fade,..... (created by the relentless scorching daytime sun)

As night fell.....we were cooking dinner in our little old kombi.....put on some Santana and James Taylor.....and life was just great.....no one, in more than 150 kilometres from uswas so exhilarating

camped on the

plateau

The night sky was simply breathtaking, as I clambered onto the roof to get some water.....only movement in the desert was shooting stars.....not a breath of wind.....what a mind-blowing experience

Finally settled down for the evening.....knowing full well, that the desert can go well below freezing at night, and up again to 50 Celsius during the day.....what an amazing contrast we were to experience

Finally got to sleep about 11 pm.....and all was quiet.....

WHEN SUDDENLY.....

When suddenlythere an enormous bang outside.....

I jumped to my feet.....exiting the door,... In a hurry..... wondering what hell was going on

What on earth could have happened..... I frantically surveyed

Looked up, petrified

and saw petrol running down all over the kombi.....all over the roof and down the sides.....hoping like hell it wasn't dripping on the battery.....because, if it ignited in any way.....we're alltoasted crispies

We would go up in a blaze of glory....

like this.....

Scrambled frantically up on to the roof.....and one of the spouts on one of the petrol tanks had snapped off at the base.....with us, losing about 15 litres of fuel.....(which we desperately could not afford to lose).....lifted the petrol tank into an upright position and

secured it firmly.....leaving it in that position all night....expecting to deal with the problem the next day.....

spent considerable time moping up, and trying to dry everything out.....and trying to figure out what could of possibly happened.....of which we came up with this conclusion

That the spouts of the petrol tanks would have been weakened,.....due to the bouncy corrugated potholey roads.....intense heat would have also expanded the petrol in the tanks, (in which petrol is notorious for)and the cold would have contracted the petrol...in the tanks.....so hence, all this movement..... snapped the spout base

petrol tanks and
spouts

Of course we didn't want it to happen to the others as well, so the next 2 days, was spent getting all 3 fully laden petrol tanks down off the roof racks, manoeuvring them into an upright position and Fibreglassing around the 3 stems..... (which was very heavy and awkward).....the fibreglassing taking up most of the day, because, having worked with fibreglass many times before, I had wanted them to cure slowly, as to not create further daytime heat than the 50 degrees we were already experiencing (fast curing produces a lot of heat.....so hence slow curing..... or less hardener)

Bit like
this.....

And then we had to get the fully laden tanks , back up roof again, and secured....quite an effort, I can assure youand particularly awkward

Desert forever

Having lost a further 2 days, and more fuel, and a high consumption of water I might add (due to our stationary status).....serious doubts crept over us, as we neared the end of the plateau, and the track, supposedly ahead in the endless sand dunes... was not visible from this elevated position, and the Sahara suddenly woke up to its scary reputation.....and our isolation was becoming somewhat unnerving

It was at this stage that we made the decision to just wait, hopefully, for some more possible company, that we were assured....would eventually come.....if we just waited

It had now been a week since Ghardaia, and not a sign of any travellers.....and of course I had a 3 month pregnant wife as well.....helping me do the heavy duties i might add.....

things were not lookin particularly good.....as we waitedand waited....and waited

Another day passed,and if I remembered right, we waited 3 days, until finally there was a speck on the horizon.....and would it be our long awaited companion, or, is it just another puff of dust in the distance, mesmerizing us once again.....

However, this time, the dust exploded into a black dot,and a motor could be clearly heard.....with eyes straining, an 8 ton lone army truck came into view,

'Siafu Expeditions' 8 ton

Army truck....

.....finally stopping close to us....and we began to swap stories,....theirs being,that they were with an expedition company (as the supply truck)...had broken a rear axle (on those notorious corrugated roads), and stopped off at Ghardaia to fix it, 8 days ago, but were unable to get it replaced or repaired

so, a week later, continued on with just front wheel drive.....

and here they were.....The Siafu Trans Africa expedition support vehicle, a week behind the other 5 expedition Land Roverswho had gone on, well ahead of them.....and now, we were lumped with their supply truck..... and full of food, I might add!!!.....bummer!.....ha.....but plastic food unfortunatelyjust add wateryuk.

Anyway, there was plenty of ityahoo....

There's nothing likesitting in a circle, around a dinner table....bit of Elton John, and a sing song.....in the middle of the Sahara Desert.....hundreds of kilometres from the nearest person.....very special!!!!!!

our new friends, Chris and

Katrina

The next morning we negotiated the descent from the plateau, only to be confronted with a series of piles of stones being our only indication of any sort of track.....these piles would often be around 500 meters apart but were often obscured by sand drifts, but never the less we continued on for several days, following them whilst they remained visible or partially visible ‘

Piles of

rocks.....our only guide

At one stage the sand got particularly soft and boggy, and slow progress was going to be inevitable, with no more than 50 kilometres progress for the whole day, very laborious and extremely dusty.....so we made some drastic, and error ridden changes to our progress, that nearly ended up in complete disaster

Even though the truck was clearly labouring, with front wheel drive only....because it had bigger fatter tyres, and a far more powerful motor than ours, we felt that they should go first at this stage, and leave some wheel prints in the sand, for us to follow in.....and because we had lowered our vehicle by dropping significant tyre pressure, it would be easier to negotiate the sand drifts.....behind them

By this time, we were at least 600 kilometres from any sort of human activity, but were feeling very confident and secure, and in charge,..... even though nearing the middle of the Sahara..

Butits amazing how quick things change

Near Disaster

.....throwing up more dust than we anticipated, and because of this, we tended to drop back from them somewhat, as the sand dust just continued to engulf our vehicle.....were we driving with handkerchiefs as face masks, sand all through the kombi...and as we dropped further and further backwith no visible sign of the truck in front of us....and, of course, they couldn't see us.....

Suddenly, an ominous sound appeared.....it was as though the motor was labouring and struggling.....

and eventually we came to a sudden halt, as the bottom of the kombi came to rest on the sand drifts....the motor displaying its well underpowered, and underperforming ability,.....which I was afraid ofstuck well in the sand.....going nowhere.....and....and

stuck in the
sand.....

our companion truck hurling off into the distance.....totally unaware of our predicament...and could be at least 50 kilometres ahead of us before they realised that we weren't behind them.....in fact we would be bogged axil deep all alone some 50 kilometres further behind them, ...

and they, like us ,were touch and go, in the petrol stakestheir consumption being significantly higher than ours.....they wouldn't be able to retrace their footsteps.....and of course, particularly now as darkness would be creeping over them later in the day.....we would be all alone, and unable to move

You have to make decisions very quickly in desperate moments like these, and so a desperate lunge was done by both of us, (and yelling and screaming I might add)...as we squeezed and hooted and blasted the push bike 'so-called air horns' on each side of our roof racks and just kept blasting away...barp....barp..barp....barp.....barp...they were very loud in the stillness of the Sahara air.....along with our yelling.....our only hope was that they had heard us

pushbike hooters on left and
right side

We continued on ...like it seemed for ever....

but eventually just stopped,..... and quietly listened in the stillness of the desert..... for a change of pitch motor sound, or visual affirmation.....

Nothing.....

Nothing..... (and were in the middle of the Sahara Desert..... yiiiikes!)

Seconds seemed like hours.....as we quietly waited and waited for some form of affirmation.....but all we could hear....was just the ever quietening gear shift changes in the diminishing distance

Untiltotal quietness

This is when, you go into crazy creative mode.....and million crazy options flood your mind....and you become frantic for solutions

.....

But fortunately.... Unbeknown to us,.....was, that they had also deep sand difficulties themselves up ahead....and they also, had come to a halt, like us,and were themselves motionless temporarily ,

However

Redemption

but now also with good rear visibility,and as the dust was now settling.....

and it was noticed by them, (and heard by them)..... of our following absence,..... and so, a hastily turn around was executed by them, (after freeing themselves from their predicament...of course).....

and bursting out of the suns haze...with airhorn blastingcame our fantastic redemption

‘Now a days’ of course, there is a tar sealed road across the Sahara,.....but then, civil war, had neglected and diminished the Sahara crossing to, an obscure track of sorts, which was only just distinguishable at places,and when the sand storms hit.....(which we were about to experience by the way) you could travel vast distances with only a pile of rocks for navigation (the Sahara covers nearly 10 million square miles, larger than the whole of North America, so of course, so its vastness is legendary and scary)

and so.....

We adopted different strategies after that, and got through the next week with relative ease....eventually arriving at the small Sahara Oasis of ‘In Salah’approx. 700 kilometres south of ‘Ghardaia’(and of course.....after many euphoric and magical moments.....which you can understand, are somehow too difficult to describe, but fantastically unique, all the same)

The small Oasis of In Salah, was mainly occupied by the desert dwelling 'Tuareg' people.....of whom we got to know particularly well, as we hung around for several days

Our awesome Tuareg friends

At night we would have a large outdoor fire....all of us sitting around it, including our 'Tuareg' friends, and the hospitality was truly magnificent

At one stage, as we swapped gifts..... the 'Tuareg' leader handed me his great grandfathers sword ..as his gift to me (which of course..... I still have today).....even to this day in 2021, 'Tuareg' warriors still carry a Tuareg sword.

Tuareg sword.....which i still
have today

However....this 100 yr old sword I was given, had no doubt seen blood.....but unfortunately today, it is 'worse for the ware' in my care, because 'no humidity' preserves leather (Sahara)....'high humidity' destroys leather (NZ)but we still have it fortunately... in its damaged state

The girls tried on Tuareg clothes while we played with the Tuareg kids.....was so awesome

Paula and Katrina try on
some Tuareg clothes

But the time came, to finally move onand as we listened to short wave radio ('voice of America')...chills ran down our spine, as a new dictator had taken over Uganda (which we were now heading towards)....and Idi Amin was throwing all Asians and whites out of Uganda.....

Swearing allegiance to Idi
Amin

Never the less we continued on our way, confidently knowing that we have complied with all the rules, and have visas to match

As we continued on our journey to our next Oasis spot.... 'Tamanrasset' (600 kilometres to the south)... a beautiful day for travelling was on the cardswhen suddenly ...to the west....thundering towards us...was a huge wall of turbulent air-borne sand ,,,,as far as the eye could see.....and nearly a mile high.....finally hitting uswith ferocious winds that engulfed and shook our kombi, like a rag doll

Bit like this

After an hour, it calmed down a little, but we were to negotiate thru a steady sand storm, for the next 3 days.....no wonder the Bedouin and Tuareg covered their faces.....we, and our

kombi were riddled, with sand build ups everywhere and even though I had double filters on the engine..... when we reached Rhodesia, the brand new motor was on its last legs.....blowing smoke everywhere...only got 20,000 kilometres out of it...sheeeesh!

I Rebuilt the motor....new rings and pistons in Salisbury, and again in Capetown.....but gave up in the end,.....defeated..... I concluded.... it was stuffed

Weird

However, we had now covered a considerable amount of the Sahara.....and at some point during our journey south towards Tamanrasset, became quite puzzled as we ran across, a rather peculiar, deserted looking airfield, rubbish and military build-up of abandoned military equipment everywhere. Army helmets, 44 gallon drums, helicopters, trucks, jeeps, half-tracks.....all abandoned.....very strange

.....Sahara Army

abandonment

So thought I would grab a helmet... as a souvenir (as you do) when I was stopped in my tracks by our companions ..yelling.....'don't touch'.....'don't touch'.....'Im'e pretty sure, this is where the Nuclear Atomic warheads were tested'.....

Junk all over the ground....including helmets...nearly

picked one of these up

Of course they were proved to be right....detonation point being, just a mile away.....was very eerie

and everyone in that mid 60s nuclear program died of radiation poisoning.....and a monument to those who died of radiation poisoning was erectedand fenced off I might add,.....some 40 years later(2005).....as high levels radiation still exist there even today

Imagine, if I had of taken that highly radio active helmet and slept next to it for the next 6 months.....and my wife being pregnant,.....sheeeesh!!

Tamanrasset

Tamanrasset was a bigger town than expected, but unfortunately, currently, no fuel available here, so we pushed on to 'In Guezzam', 500 kilometres to the south, accompanied by a Swedish group we found in Tamanrasset, who had an exciting Sahara journey, accompanied by a trail bike.....each took turns at riding the bike, and it was so cool to watch the bike departing alone, and later the support vehicle following up in the rear.....

kinda like

this...

however, they took a wrong turning, at a certain point, and distressingly, we never saw them again.....oh the wiles of desert lifewe saw their tracks heading south west into a very deserted region of the Sahara....heading towards 'Timbuktu'....hopefully they were ok ...but I would have to say, we were sceptically doubtful

Crossed into the country of Niger, and at a place called Agadez, which was around the 2,000 kilometre mark from 'Ghardaia' (in Algeria) and fortunately found some fuel here (in a 44 gallon drum, as we were informed), but my concern over fuel supplies was quite justified, as we learnt that we had just 1 litre left....sheeeesh!.....and it was very expensive.

it like this...

As we headed for the town of 'Zinder' in Niger, the terrain became more savannah type plains, and we had our first wild animal experience (so to speak), as we chased some Ostriches through the scrub, off the beaten track....to take some photos.....was awesome fun.....'we're in Africa...yahoo'!

yahoo.....chasing these Ostriches

thru the scrub

shortly after a leopard ran out in front of our moving vehicle and ran for half a minute or so on the track, 3 meters in front of the van.....very exciting moment for us kiwi kids.....wild animals 'wow'...amazing!!

Bit like this.....(again)

Unfortunately the life expectancy in Niger was only 35yrs old at that time, as was noticeable as the locals appeared somewhat malnourished and undernourishedas there was no doubt, a cruel side to the Sahara as well.....

And as we entered into the city of Kano, Nigeria, (further south).....we find out that public executions were a daily occurrence in Nigeria, but apart from their fanaticism, we did fall in love with their simple, sub Saharan existence.....

Us entering Kano, Nigeria

1972

just loved the blue dye works, where Berber and Tuareg garments were made, and their simple architecture, including impressive mosques

Moving on to Cameroon where public executions were also a daily occurrence, was also a bit of a worry, but when we reached the border of The Central African Republic.....chills ran down your spine, as you camped on the Cameroon side of the border for the night, and you could hear the screams of many unfortunate criminals (both men and women) being ostracised into a 5 kilometre wide 'no mans land' strip between the 2 countries.....this was their jail (so to speak).....with no police interference, and so criminal activity was rife.....rape and murder unenforcedvery scary, as we had to drive across that 5

kilometre strip the next day.....and, can you believe, got a puncture half way across.....that's the fastest wheel change in history.....should be in the Guinness book of records....ha.....friggin scary

tyres... One of the many flat

As we entered into The Congo, we had a mixed experience

At the border of The Congo, we were confronted with straight out racism, that we knew we would experience in Africa, and it became a game of submission and surrender, so as to somewhat lighten up the border officials.....

The border crossing buildings, were very sub standard.....dirt floors and the border officials were very unkempt and rowdythere were many people doing the border crossing, with many lines throughout the day.....but we were the only white faces...

Bit like this....

When we spent an hour or 2, lining up, like everyone else did, (if you could call it a line...more like a camp out), and finally it was our turn at the front of the line, but instead of stamping our passports, that we were expecting, we were sent to the back of the line again.....and this happened right throughout the day until all the migrants had disappeared except us.....our passports were then thrown to us yelled at to 'get out'.....

This was very intimidating for a kiwi used to integration.....but then again, knowing the history of The Congo, I was not at all surprised.....

Just a few years earlier, (late 60s) 'The Congo' had gained its independence from white colonial rule and obviously,...was still fresh on their minds....and a group called The Simba (Mau Mau), had been violently active against white settlers locally, and small bands still do today.....and we fell in that same categorymakes you feel very vulnerable.....

and as we headed for Uganda, apprehension was rife amongst us...and we were proved to be correct in our assessment as we approached the border later on

uprising Simba mid 60s Congo

However the opposite treatment was also shown to us.....

On Christmas day we stopped at a Catholic mission(shortly after the border) and thought us guys, would scout through the jungle looking for a nice Christmas lunch for us all,..... leaving the girls to have a workout on the washboards

1972

However, unexpectedly, as we rounded a corner on this track in the jungle.....there in front of us was this huge white Palace..... and servants who opened the large gates, and waved us inopened the doors for us and chaperoned us into a large room,.....us 3 were just in our t-shirts, shorts and thongs (only white faces in the place..... i guess was the reason).....but all the Africans present, were immaculate3 piece suits, ties, polished shoes.....and out walks President Mobutu

Mobutu's overgrown White

Palace today

.....beckons us to sit next to him at the 24 seat table and promptly loads the table up with chickens, turkeys....you name it, and beckons us to help ourselves.....and promptly tells us of this boxing fight he was arranging between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman... 'rumble in the jungle' he calls it.....didn't mean much to us then....but we did get great hospitality ,.... And unfortunately, had to tell the girls we were unable to find anything to bring back.....naughty eh!!

Mobutu and Mohammad Ali...

Empathy

As we made our way through the now, thick jungle, on this track towards the Ugandan border post,we were bewildered to see.....(1 kilometre before the Ugandan border post)a European couple walking along the track by themselves , clearly in some sort of distress.....

Being as this was in the middle of the thick jungle.....we stopped and picked them up obviously, perplexed by the obvious distressing and dangerous situation they were inand they began to proclaim their dilemma to us.....warning us in no uncertain terms to bypass Uganda

The Ugandan army had commandeered their kombi.....taken all their money and passports.....left them with nothing, and had thrown them out of the country.....penniless

As we could visually sees the border post.....they may have wondered about our quick turn-a-round and exit.....ha!

However, finally, after 2 days, left our new friends at a Catholic mission, in The Congo, at their request, and continued on our merry way

At one of the few catholic Missions....the only evidence of white people remaining in Central Africa

What a trip

Shortly after we encountered another weird thing.....there was this white guy walking along this jungle track, all alone, with a back pack on, oblivious to the danger that obviously lurked in the jungle.....and clearly oblivious to the anti-white sentiment that is being displayed locally.....so we asked him if he would like a lift....."where are you going" ..we asked.....

"anywhere" was the reply

This guy clearly seems to be distressed about something

"are you ok".....was the question.....and the answer really spooked me

'Lee' had just finished his tour of Duty in Viet Nam, and he was visibly shakenas he began to recall all the terrible stuff he had seen...the dramatically heightened fear factorthe Napalm.....the killings.....and he just wanted to get away from it all.....

He seemed to be living in a dream...in fact
he slept under the Kombi often, and often you would see leopard paws all

around the van in the morning.....one hardcore

man!!

Lee....dreaming away inside

our comfortable Kombi

You had to be very alert in those days, as stealing was rife in that part of the world, and often when we would stop at some village, to get water supplies and so on, would often need to aggressively defend our belongings, often patrolling around our vehicles carrying our machetes,....

and even then, they still stole my wetsuit, much to my annoyance,....so promptly stomped into the local mud hut village, some distance away and demanded to see the chief, and have wetsuit returned

The Chief did emerge from his mud hut, but so did many of his henchmen as well.....and when (being the only white man there)....and being surrounded by his machete and spear brandishing entourage.....i promptly said the wetsuit was a gift from meand I hope it fits sheeeesh!

Monsoon

Unfortunately the monsoons came a little early that year. and even just a slight sprinkle would slow you up considerably..... on these, single lane, narrow roads.....which happened to be the main road through Africa....

meet up with another kombi hereaccompanied by 3 Japanes adventurers who had slipped inland from Kenya.....and they couldnt speak a word of English.....man, did we have fun and games

Main road through Africa

sometimes travelling only up to 5 kilometres a day....often towing one another on the greasy surface, and slamming against the bank, as we would often lose control

Us towing our Japanese friends through
the Congolese jungle

.....and negotiating the bridges was often equally as tricky..... sometimes with only sparse logs to negotiate across.....and extremely dangerous when wet and slippery

Main highway thru Africa.....Ha!....only just fit across
bridges..1/2 tyres on the bidge only....scary

we only encountered 3 kilometres of tar seal from Ghardaia to Rwanda (in approx. 5,000 kilometres of travel).....but with comical consequences, I might add.....

So proud of their new tar seal in the Congo (which also crossed a bridge half way along this 3 kilometre stretch).....

that they just closed the road for 3 days, while the bitumen hardened on the bridge.....
...and vehicles just camped in the middle of the road ,(each side of the bridge) and lit fires on the roads for cooking, and hammocks across from truck to truck.....very compliant.....but ...not us!!.....

As the water in the river was still only 1 foot deep (the monsoons hadn't fully come yet), we decided to not use the bridge...but clear a track down to the river, drive across the river, and up the machete cleared track on the other sidewhich we did successfully, and saved 3 days, I might add, much to the amazement of all the onlookers.....but I was not surprised, that they didn't follow in our footsteps, as they were all heavy laden old trucks

Getting across the main Congo River was another level again.....civil war in the county had virtually destroyed all infrastructure, and a few planks on some dugout canoes was the only way to finally get across.....being conscious of the many hippos that frequented this river.....

crossing the Congo river by canoe.....1 inch
freeboard in places....scary!

one of which was killed (hippo) on our far bank landing spot..... delaying our landing for up to half an hour.....

watching these 2 African women fighting over the still pumping heart of the hippo ,was quite a spectacleblood spurting everywhere....they were just covered in blood.....

reminded me of working at the freezing works back home (NZ).....ha!

chopping up hippo....

Butterflies

There were many spectacular moments during this trip, and one of those particular euphoric moments, was when a light shower of rain would hit, and literally hundreds and thousands of every imaginable coloured butterflies, would fill the sky,.... and land on you.....hundreds of beautiful butterflies, all over you.....

But for some reason, hundreds collapsed and died in front of me.....all over the ground.....so I gathered up many, and took them back to New Zealand, (and in later years) made up a beautiful collage, and had it on the wall until recently..... as a memorial....unfortunately have no photos of it

Another amazing thing about Africa in.....those days,was the amazing array of fruit that was just growing on the sides of the jungle track.....which were often seen ripening on our roof racks.....bananas, pineapples, and pawpaws,

road....ripening
pineapple picked of the side of the

But also had our scary moments tooas we stopped at the Kembe falls on the Congo border.....

A beautiful waterfalland very mesmerising.....

And as we were engrossed in the mesmerising hypnotics of the waterfallsa dugout canoe gently pulls up beside us and in the relatively calm area of the river starts to unload a canoe full of fruit.....which he was intending to sell to us.....or swap for a t-shirt.....we naturally obliged and during the course of our bargaining I gesticulated to him.....'can I have a paddle'.....he nods

So I jump in my first dugout canoe experience.....fantastic...

i paddle calmly, in the still waters at the slight flowing side area, and before you know iti was out of sight of Paula, our African friend, and the kombi....

Kembe falls
The tranquil.....but dangerous...

Monkeys and birds in the jungle trees.....and just me... fantastic.....felt a bit wobbly, in the 20ft long, log, dug out canoe.....but persevered up river a little more.....'wow, Ime paddling up the Congo river,...all alone,...in a hollow dugout canoe amazing'.....never dreamed I'd be doing this several years agowhat an experience.....

Canoes a Bit like this.....found a

little further on

until.....until.....a hippie pops up next to me, and im'e struggling to keep this thing afloat...this ..round log lme in, wobbly all over the place, and now...turbulence created by the hippos.....making it even worse

but things get even more worse than that, as I didn't know how to successfully turn this 20ft log around.....so I figured that the only way to turn this thing.....was to allow the front of the dugout, to slowly creep across into the slipstream of the fast flowing part of the river,.....which is 'thankfully'..... is exactly what happenedand the front of the dugout did swing around...and point me in the opposite direction...which was a relief.

But of course,lme getting pulled into the fast flowing part of the riverand there is a waterfall just around the corner.....

holy shit.....did I panic.....have you ever seen a speed up movie.....imagine a normal frame movie at 25 frames a second.....well I was about 2000 frames a second..... superman.....

and eventually made into the calm area as I rounded the corner, 50ft from the waterfall.....I reckoned that African would have been a little bit pissed, seeing his lovely dugout careering over the falls,..... don't you.....ha!

Marijuana

Of course, in the middle of Africa.....in those days.....there was no police presence anywhere, and tribal reinforcement of values, was different with each village,but the general consensus was, that smoking dope was locally encouraged, in place of tobacco (which was hard to get hold of).....and not policed in any way

and that is why, we were constantly barraged and inundated with people wanting to swap for anything, and marijuana was often their swapping currency.....10 , 20, 50 kilos....baskets full everywhere,

A basket full of

marijuana....ha!

but carrying anything that might catch the attention of the border guards,..... (so it) became a resounding no no from us.....the least attention possible.....was our mandate

Tense

We would often travel with some other vehicle (like the 8 ton Siafu truck).....and often times.....even up to a week....by ourselves, but at this particular time, we happened to be travelling with the truck.....and a Land Rover

We pulled over into a jungle clearing.....of the single lane dirt track.....our kombi, the Siafu truck, and our Land Rover friends that we had recently met.....and were settling down for a nice dinner.....even with outside chairs and tables.....very civilized...

dinner
Settled down for a nice

Thick jungle as far as the eye could seeand totally deserted,..... but, in the way distance, we could hearfor a considerably long time.....the changing pitch of a truck negotiating up and down terrain

In the stillness of an African night.....noise carries And this vehicle, seemed to take more than half an hour to get to us

In fact, it was well after dark before they reached us, and all we could see, was approaching headlights

But we became very disturbed when the truck stops directly opposite us, on this single lane track, and turns off the motor..... and headlights

On the back of the truck were about 20 machete yielding men, obviously coming home from work.....but were all drunk and pointing at the girls and making fun at them.....we told the girls to get in the vehicles and be ready to take off , should anything happenand then went and got our machetes out and put them on the table

At about that time neighbouring Burundi was experiencing genocide,...with over 500,000 people executed and murdered by machetes,.....so we knew what the locals were capable of.

Genocide Africa

A stand off, for more than an hour took place, and tensions were extremely high.....with them getting drunker every minute.....was extremely tense, and with us 5 guys, sitting quietly and adrenaline going thru the roof

After an hour, he starts the engine up, and after about 5 minutes, slowly moves away.....

You could just about hear the reliefeveryone just collapses in their chairs.....exhausted!!.....you have to be in a situation like this, to feel the crippling tension inside of you.....you realise that at any second you may feel the blade of a sharp machete,,.....very frightening, and especially that, one of our own...Peter...was a very, very impulsive personwho had caused us headaches before.....and we knew.....he could be as scary as them,.....with his impulsiveness..'sheesh'

impulsive..you have to be cool in Africa
Peter.....a real nice guybut

Steep

The Land Rover went ahead of us at this stage of our journey and our travelling companions, were once again, just the 8 ton Siafu Army truck.....which was also about to cause us more headaches once again

We ran across a steep incline, on a narrow track, through the jungle, that worried us greatly,.....in terms of it being very steep, and one of the corners half way up, had a menacing camber on itand on the right side of the road, was a 500ft jungle laden cliff into the ravine below

steep corner....kinda like this

We decided that the truck would traverse the ominous steeply graded track first... as it was doubtful, that we had enough engine grunt, to get to the top, and we may possibly need a tow

So they took a good run up, as you do, (and remember, they only had front wheel drive)....but plenty of power.....

It looked like it was just going to be a breeze for them, traversing the lower stages with ease and power.....in fact, too much power

As they reached the half way point, and about to encounter the corner with the difficult camber on it,.....the front wheels had the power,spinning, vibrating, and bouncy along, seemingly with great ease,.....

However, the back of the truck was being dragged over towards the edge of the track (because of the bad camber of the road of course).....and because they had no traction (being lifeless wheels).....

when eventually,

the rear wheels lost their grip.....

and slid over the cliff, pulling the 8 ton truck backwards, over the cliff

Down through the jungle laden cliff it fell.....several hundred feet, backwards,smashing, and crashing through the trees, and was about to fall over the steeper part of the cliff into the ravine below...when it was arrested by the myriads of the strong and thick ...jungle vines.....

hanging precariously..... but with very little damage

The three adventurer friends of ours, in the front of the truck were unhurt....but very shaken up of course

Not a word was spoken by anyone.....which seemed like forever, but everyone just stood and sat there frozen.....all thinking ,what the hell do we do now

We assessed our situation, and it was clear that we were unable to take any more weight in the kombi, as we were choc-a-bloc now.....even overloadedwith Lee still with us, and the motor now underperforming, as the sand had chewed it out somewhat.....

i was doubtful it would even get us to South Africa, and as I mentioned before, and irate citizens in South Africa complained to the police, about our pollution,.... more than once

our 3 friends, Peter, Katrina, and Geoff....climbed carefully out of the truck, and made their way up to the road once again (the cliff at this top point was just manageable in terms of climbing ...about 80 degrees steepness and jungle laden)

And many proposals were put forward, but after a half an hour (this being about 10 o'clock in the morning).....a decision was made that we would try and winch the 8 ton truck, back up the cliff face, and they had an army 200 metre 1 inch thick winching steel cable on board

It took us about 3 hours to clear (with machetes) a pathway up for the truck, with trees and jungle removed on the sloping cliff, so as make it easy as possible for the wheels (they would not get caught on anything)

Bought the cable up and wrapped it around a huge tree at the top, and then back down to the truck

The cable was then attached to the extended front wheel rims, and as you drove up in first gear, the cable would rap around the extended rim, and slowly wind up around the rim, winching itself up.....very precarious and dangerous

The extended rim for
winching purposes

And with a huge amount of tension on the cable,and having seen one break before, which springs back like a rubber band, cutting everything in half in its wakeand knowing that there will be more than 8 ton vertical strain on this cable..... was very worrying...especially to the Peter the driver

However, at one o'clock, we were ready to start hauling up the 8 ton truck,hoping like hell the big tree wouldn't uproot, or worse be cut in half

Finally all went according to plan, and the truck finally settled on the clearing, at the top of the hill at about 3pm

Geoff removing winching cables
from front of truck

Another one hour was spent, picking up the debris, as there was junk everywhere, including all their private belongings, and food (which were in the open back, of course) ,...spread right down the cliff

By 4pm we were ready to move on again...making only about 5 kilometres this day

Freedom

At this stage we decided to separate, and continue on alone by ourselves, as they spent the day doing repairs on the truck

Crossed over the equator,

Paula sitting under the equator

sign....Central Africa 1972

and found a few old buildings with dirt floors that look like kind-of shops....went in oneis this a shop I thought!.....'certainly there were shelves and shelves stacked with cans of food'but guess what.....they were all the samebaked beans...thousands of cans of baked beans....nothing else.....'aaah,..ill have a can of..... let me seemake that baked beans''...ha!

That was the only thing you could buy here in these shops, were baked beans.....

only kinda-shops we saw in

central Africa

Tensions again

As we headed south towards the country of Rwanda, we came across a tribe of pygmies.....and did a big swap (as you do)a t-shirt, for a 'monkey skin covered' quiver, cross bow, and poison tipped arrowsof which I obviously removed the poison tips as we entered Capetown.....didn't wanna get pricked by none of those...ha!

Anna.....Friend of ours

.....Capetown.....monkey skin covered quiver hangin' on the wall

But the scariest thing of all, was, after I did the swap, decided to take a photo of the Pygmies.....which apparently is a no no.....and they chased us up the road, after I had taken a photo ,....because they believe, apparently, that their spirit enters the camera, and their spirit is stolen from them.....so they became very irate.....but.....we won the raceha!

pygmie village

A short time after, we experienced another flat tire (which was now happening daily.....or even multiple times a day), but this happened on..... (once again) a narrow track, with a heavy camber leaning the wrong way (sound familiar), but only a small drop into a creek.....but unfortunately, both jacks were now broken, (however managed to fix them further on) but unfortunately, all the weight of the vehicle was on this lower rear, flat wheel.....

there was no way that I could lift the Kombi manually (and we were now travelling alone, Paula and I).....so as a last resort, cut down a tree, and tried to use length of the tree trunk, to lever the kombi uprightbut tried, and tried, and tried, but to no avail....too heavy.....

We were all alone, and this track in the jungle, is rarely frequented, so after half an hour of so many different ideas,..... gave up.....and were just sitting on the track contemplating our next move.....

Haven't seen anyone, or any village in the last 20 kilometres,so not sure what to do.....

When suddenly about 8 big Africans, walk out of the jungle.....

friendly looking I thought.....

so gesticulated to them,..... If they would lift the van for me, so I can change the tire...that would be nice of them,, I thought

They complied, and the 8 Africans lifted the van , and I was able to change the wheel very successfully,.....nice guys

However, I didn't realise that their act of compassion would actually cost me anything....

Well it certainly did

and, apparently, in the form of clothing..... each wanting his fair share, and pulling and tugging on my t-shirt and boardshorts became alarmingand it was noticeable they were becoming, a little more agitated, rougher, and aggressive as well "I want t-shirt" I'm sure they were saying

their voices were also being raised, and a bit of push and shove was going on.....

But it escalated to the point where machetes were noticed, and the picking up of rocks and timber battens, also became somewhat frightening.....and being uncertain what to do (as this was also my last t-shirt, having already given 20 away) told Paula to get in the kombi.....and when I say "go".....but I must tell youI was a little more concerned, than more than just my t-shirt

"just put your foot down, and just drive away as fast as you can ..when I say go"

She started the kombi up, and I was pushing and shoving with these guys when I suddenly yelled out to Paula..... "go" "go"and Paula floored it, with me just being able to grab hold of the roof rackhoping like hell it wouldn't fall off or break with my weightand as I also (at the same time jumped on the back bumper), also hoping it would hold my weight.....

meanwhile these guys are trying to pull me off the van, while I'm frantically fighting them off, and they are now throwing rocks at me , banging me with pieces of wood and we continue racing down the road,

with us finally outpacing them.....Paula doing about 50k an hour with me hanging on the back.....

Very very Scary.....

But we still have even scarier situations ahead of us

But some amazing times as well

Silverbacks

Shortly after, we entered the country of Rwanda.....and Silverback Gorilla country.....which we were pretty excited about

However, neighbouring Burundi had just experienced genocide that year, 1972,half a million murdered.....and tensions were still very high

Burundi Genocidesame as Rwanda in later years

and the Silverback Gorillas, were to be found on the border between Rwanda and Burundi, in the mountains.....

and we were just 5 kilometres away from them.....very tempting!!!!

Anyway..... we made the decision to proceed up the mountain to see the gorillas, as they were just so close, and we would be forever kicking ourselves, if we didn't at least try, being so close

However, as we turned off the main dirt track, and proceeded to go more than a kilometre or more, towards the advancing mountains,.....we noticed another kombi, tucked in a clearing, and hidden well off the road, and the occupants waving us down

Was so nice to see some more travellers againbut the urgency in their actions was slightly alarming....

and so, they proceeded to tell us that their friends had gone for a quick jaunt to the mountains, and would be back in an hour or so.....but this was yesterday morning, and no trace of them since.....or their vehicle....even though this couple had gone to the mountains, just an hour or so ago, before we arrived, in search of them.....but with no trace of their companionsor their vehicle

If that doesn't give you alarm bells,.....nothing will

So we did a big turn around and headed in the other directionnaturally.....but we were not at all surprised, considering the short-wave radio information that we were receiving from the BBC broadcasting stationwas...."to avoid contact with the nation of Burundi"

short wave radio

Serengeti National Park

You tend to get over things pretty quickly.....especially when there is always something exciting ahead of you....and Tanzania and Kenya were ahead of us.....Mt Kilimanjaro and the Serengeti ...which I was really looking forward to...

Incidentally 'Toto's song....'I bless the rains down in Africa'which was still, a decade away.....but even today, is still my favourite theme song.....naturally

But anyway,..... we decided to give Nairobi in Kenya a miss.....crossed lake Victoria.....and continued on to the Serengeti, even though the monsoon rains had finally come...which slowed our pace right down considerably, on the dirt roads, because of the very slippery surface, and difficulty getting up some hills, required us to wait several hours, even days, as the mud just played havoc with us, and steep inclines caused us to lighten the vehicle (walking up the hills with the excess weight...water etc) more than once, to make the grade

Start of the heavy monsoon season and
slippery roads...lake Victoria

However, followed Lake Victoria around until we reached 'Ldabaka', the 15,000 sq kilometre Serengeti turn off....and with great excitement headed out to the Savanah plains, on a largely unused track....but at least it saved us having to go further on up, towards the more difficult hilly regionsanyway.....what a great feelingno one around.. just us.....

just us and the Serengeti
animals

in fact we never saw one other person in the several days we were in the Serengeti.....but did run upon two abandoned Safari lodges....

Abandoned Safari Lodge.Serengeti
1972....just a few vultures

so evenings saw us camp,. In our kombi, wherever we pleased, and often the kombi would be surrounded by Zebras, warthogs, Deer, vultures, Elephants, Ostriches, wildebeests, and even at one stage had to shoo the Zebras away as they chewed on my roof rack tarpaulin

"Shoo.....leave my tarpauline
alone...thank you"...ha!

.....wake up in the morning with animals all around the kombi...awesome!!but alas, saw no lions.....often heard them at night, but didn't see any....but did see Cheetahswas nice!

animals all around

in the morning.....wake up ...and

cheeky monkeys.....

However, did spend a lot time mending punctures,.... and some of the flat tire surroundings, kept you very alert,....very alert.....let me tell you...often very scary if you got a flatty with lots of foliage around

But I freaked out one day, when we had crossed over the river and said to Paula, that I would like to photograph the hippos

crossing a small river

.....not realising that I had sneaked up to the hippo's out of sight of the kombi,...and when i realised this was a game park and my vehicle wasn't visible.....man did I feel vulnerable.....as I ran back 100 meters to the kombi, I envisaged an attack by something.....very scary

kombi not visable.....about 20

hippo's in the water.....

But our worst nightmare of the trip, was to still to come

Our biggest Nightmare

We got to the edge of the Serengeti plains, and saw that the track south, continued up the nearby mountain, to the Ngorongoro crater at the summit (which was naturally, shown on the plan).....but one concerning factor, was that the so-called volcanic track (or road) up the mountain seemed to go vertical (on the map).....not side to side (like a snake)..and this was very concerning, as this seemed like more than 1,000ft climb.....straight up the mountain (in a straight line).....with the most steep part, at the top

Ngorongoro Crater in the distance

This was the only road southand it looked far to steep for me.....if it snaked up the mountain.....we may be able to handle itbut a straight roadno way

However it was the only road, so we had no choicei was quite certain that our gutless 25h/p motor....and our heavily laden vehicle, is gonna create a heap of drama for us.....and it did

We did a small trial run, and drove up 100ft or so, then had to back down, realising Ime gonna have to get a good run at this..... (any local vehicles would be in the 70h/p range... .powerful,... and 4 wheel drive....so...would be a piece of cake for thembut certainly not us).....the brakes became red hot also.....as we reversed down the 100ft or so

So.....we took a fast run.....my pregnant wife bouncing everywhere, as we found every pothole on the Serengeti

Raced up the face of the mountainmotor screamingstuff bouncing everywhere, and managed to get about 800ft up the mountain until the engine died.....getting steeper all the time.....no grunt left in the motor.....

what the hell do we do now.....Ime not backing down 800 ft, and totally burn the brakes out, and have to travel the rest of our trip without brakes.....providing we can get back up the mountain of courseno....was to risky.....so what the hell do we do?

After several minutes of different ideas,..... the idea was mentionedto lighten the vehicle by taking off as much weight as possible, and make a big pile of bits and pieces on the mountain ...800ft up.....and I would try and drive the lightened vehicle up the last 200 ft.....

But remember.....where still in the Serengeti.....and heading towards the Ngorongoro crater. which has the largest concentration of wilds animals in the world

Took us an hour to unload the vehicle and roof rack, bull bars etc.....

Paula obviously was left alone near, (but back from the pile),which was scary enough, and I managed to start the lightened vehicle and slowly drove forward, with the clutch smoking away, as I rode the clutch (you only half engage the clutch.....because you have to increase the revs of the motor while half dropping the clutch).....burns your clutch out real quick.....but managed to pull ahead.....

until.....until....until the motor just conked out 50ft from the top.....and at the steepest part....i might add

Now were really stuffed.....no power left.....brakes straining on....Paula 150ft down the mountain.....no way of backing down 950ft.....and the volcanic rock of the mountain getting slipperier every footand narrower.....

if you went to the sides of the track, you would slip over as the fine peddles were unstable on the volcanic rock

What the hell do I do know?.....

Shit.....

The only course of action, I could think ofwas to edge my way up to the topsideways ...(at right angle to the road)

3ft forward (sideways) 3ft backwards (sideways) 3ft forward (sideways)...being careful not to get on the slippery pebbles each side, as i would just start to slide, and then how do you stop sliding

Also ...the steering was manual....not hydraulic.....very difficult

And so i started it up.....with about 50 ft to the top.....drove sideways on the roadand continued my decent upwards...

3ft forward.....3ft backwards.....3ft forward.....3ft backwardsslowly inching up the mountain....but this is getting very scary, as the van seemed extremely light on the top side

I was about 5ft from the top. when the top 2 wheels lifted off the ground, and I had about 2 seconds to get out of there before then van tipped and would roll 1000 ft down the mountain.....and of course....i would be killed. if I didn't get out in time....the kombi smashed to pieces

.....and the worst thing of all.....

5 month pregnant Paula left all alone (and without protection)in the Serengeti.....shiiiiite!!

What a horrible thought

As I opened the door to jump out.....the weight of the open door, slowly bought the kombi back on to the ground again

I negotiated the last 5 ft, hanging out the doorlike a yacht sailor leaning out from his yacht.....but driving at the same time.....and eventually reached the top.....yahoo!

We were so ecstaticbut quickly came down to earth with the thought of the 200ft hike...up and down with all our excess weight belongings...bringing them back up to the kombi

Took us about 2 hours, and your eyes are constantly searching for renegade animalsnone were seen fortunately

Man, did we earn our sleep that night

Dar-es-salaam

Spent a lot of time at the Ngorongoro Crater, then finally headed towards Arusha and Mt Kilimanjaro, and finally on to Dar-es-salaam,

Mt Kilimanjaro

.....where we were told we could do well on the black market...the money exchange rate that is very beneficial towards us,(having American dollars) but heavily policed against such practice (as the corrupt bank officials would pay off the police to keep control of it...and minimise the exchange rate)

Which naturally led us, down alleys, and finally, into dark rooms, where the uneventful exchange was finally done...but everyone in there, looked like something out of a dim horror movie.....scary

Checked out the surf in Dar-es-salaam at a place called Coco bch.....saw an awesome peak, got into my boardshorts..... yahoooo!

But the absence of anyone in the water, and on the beach, (and i'd be out there by myself), and thought of stingrays, or sharks, or saltwater crocodiles, kinda put me off a bit.....but as I found out years later, I needn't have worried.....bummer!!

But what lay ahead of us, was like something out of a cold war movie

As we headed for Lusaka in Zambia, we were informed by short wave radio, to avoid the place if possible,..... but as we were now down to our last \$100 dollars, our options were becoming more and more difficult

however, one enjoyable moment confronted us, as we walked down the streets of downtown Lusaka,..... there walking towards me was one white face in the crowd.....yahoo a white face....

It was one of my close surfing mates, from my home town, Brian Kane (from Whangarei NZ) about to do the trip that we've just done.... but of course going up, not down like us.....what a treat.....lifted our spirits somewhat,

but our spirits were about to come crashing down...

As we were finally about to cross the Zambesi River (where the Victoria Falls are) on Beit bridge at Chirundu (50ks South of Lusaka),

Beit bridge crossing over the

Zambezi river (just down from Victoria falls)

we were confronted by the Rhodesian army on one side of the river, and the Zambian army on the other side, with closed borders between, and an empty bridge between them both (the borders being closed because of Nelson Mandela's, ANC so-called terrorist revolutionaries, were been housed in Zambia)...and Rhodesia was not happy about that

army....bit like this

Rhodesian

Incursions and so-called terrorist actions were happening every day into Rhodesia

And sowe reached the bridge

.....the Zambian Army lifting the border barrier gate at the northern end of the bridge for us, and our lone vehicle crossed slowly over the empty bridge..... it felt like something out of a James Bond movie.....halted at the other end by the white Rhodesian army,

They took our passports.....handed them back to us

and horrified

our passports were handed back to us.....

''Denied Entry'' stamped all over them

We were mortified, having reached our first white country in months.....and then to be denied Entrywas pretty hard to handle....my 7 month pregnant, wife bursting into tears

We argued with those, higher ranking officers in charge....

But, we were told

until we had \$1000, we would not be eligible to cross into Rhodesia or into South Africa.....

we were devastated!!!

So consequently headed back to Lusaka...not knowing what to do next.....my wife was distraught

We didn't know where to stop for the night, as violent acts were happening regularly, locally, and our van could easily be ransacked at any moment.....as the anti-white feeling was rampant.....naturally enough

we drove around looking desperately for a suitable place to pull into.....and just on dark ,we found a farm with a substantially high electric fence, surrounding this farm.....buzzed at the gate, and a white Boer South African came out and met us, with her automatic AK47 raised.....very scary

Bit like this

We explained our predicament, and ended up camping next to their house for more than a week.....but I must admit.....feeling nice and safe.....in the paddock in our kombi...surrounded by a high electric fence

But what are we going to do about our money problem.....

when we didwhat no one likes to do....

call daddy for help in New Zealand.....what else...ha!

And Paulas dad wired \$1000 across to uswhich was met with great jubilation I must add.....good ol dads !!!

Finally we crossed into Rhodesia but took a more obscure road to Salisbury....thinking that keeping to the less prominent roads would be a little safer.....yea right!!!

On the same road, 2 days later, a vehicle was blown up as it ran over a land mine
.....sheeeesh!!!

Bit like this

Well, remember when Di said in England,...'Paula come and be my bridesmaid in Salisbury in March'

Well, we made it by 3 days.....and Paula was Di's bridesmaid 3 days later...how awesome....

1973 Salisbury Rhodesia

John and Di's wedding...march

wedding.....bridesmaid

camera shy Paula ,.....at the

Finally reached Capetown, after a quick stop off at Jeffries Bay,....

Paula lookin
pretty pregnant.....Capetown, South Africa... March 73

but finally went back to J Bay, 2 years later, with the Cape province surf team, of Piers Pittard (Mr J Bay...as he was known), Johnny Paarman (in my opinionthe greatest big wave rider around) and Tich Paul....and my wife and 2 little kids ...
ha!

surfing.....Jonathon Parman and Piers Pittard

Exceptional Capetown

....and surfed against the very young Natal team at J bay, including Mike Espitiso, a young Shaun Thompson, Michael Thompson and others.....and attended the Nahoon Reef Gunston 500 at East London

My most memorable moment of my surfing career.....

But Capetown had its memorable moments toobut for a different reason

The day we arrived in Capetown.....I was so keen to get a surf in.....knew nothing of the local spots, but saw (what seemed like a nice 6-7ft left hander)...however did wonder why, no one was out!

Notorious 'Outer

Kommetjie'Capetown

Got in my boardshorts, and ran down to the water.....

Shit.....it was a 40degree C, hot summers day ,.....but the water was about 15degrees C (aprox 60degrees F).....and I only had boardshorts on.....absolutely freezing

Anyway figured I would catch just a couplethen come in...

Looked a bit bigger than I thought....but decided to paddle out anyway.....

''bigger than I thought''holy shit!.....15 ft sets started pumping endlessly through.....and ime paddling further an further out the back.....freakin out about white pointers, that supposedly frequent these cold waters.....when suddenly, misjudging.....an 18 ft wave drives me down into 30ft of freezing cold waterand thick tree trunk size kelp ...

Ime 20ft under freezing water....just in boardshorts...cant feel my hands or feet.....there just so cold

Bit like this...

My board and legrope are being tossed everywhere....as i was, of course.....but remember this is 1972and legropes were still in the experimental stage.....and my legrope was tied to my ankle.....

with a knot.....(no Velcro then).....the knot had majorly tightened on my leg, with the turbulence,.....

and the legrope and board.... were wrapped around the thick kelp.....

and I was so cold, I couldn't feel my hands, so consequently, Ime 15 ft under the water.....board is wrapped around the kelp...and unable to undo the knot around my ankle.....and major turbulence swishing me everywhere

struggling and struggling.....til I finally gave up trying to undo the knot, and resigned to the fact, that I was going to drown.....my 6 month pregnant wife, making lunch in the kombi, totally oblivious to the fact, that her husband, is just drowning just a few hundred feet away

Over a minute passed....freezing.....getting tossed all around.....

My frantic state stopped.....entered into a foggy state of peace...resigned to the fact that it was all over.....my whole life flashed by me.....and felt myself drifting off.....drifting off.....drifting off.....

When BANG, my board hit me in the face.... and the knot on my board had been wrenched undone by the turbulence.....i tugged the legrope free

bit like this

and I raced 15ft to the surface with about 3 seconds left,.....my lungs bursting.....hoping and praying a wave doesn't land on top of me, just as I surface.....luckily there was nothing

Lovely introduction to Capetown, I thought.....ha!

The Cape

After many eventful moments and great surf,

Mike surfing Llandudno

.....Capetown 1974

and the prospect of buying and living in a double decker bus..... (Guy...the shaper...offered more \$ than us for it, and it ended up a surfboard factory...in a double decker bus...ha!)but it was time to head back to New Zealand, even though we had intended to stay here permanently, and even applied for citizenship, and also, had started a business here('Cosmic Sound')building stereos and surfboards once again.....in a friends garage

Cosmic sound

and even had found a nice little cottage to live in.....eventally

But,.....when I sprung someone breaking into my girls bedroom, and when they confronting me, threateningly, with a large screwdriver.....I felt it was time to move on from violent South Africa.....but.....which was a bummer....

because my good surfing friend (John Sutton) and i, had just received some plans to build, 2, concrete hull, 'Roberts 38' sail boats....and then sail on up to the Carribean, live on them, and charter them out.....and just surf

which John did, and sailed to the Carribean several years later.....

i was familiar with concrete and timber,John with open-ocean sailing at the time.....good partnership.....sadly,not to be!

Boat completed.....John and Sue
about to sail into the Blue yonder
.....and is still there 50 yrs later!!

'rubbin it in' Ha!.....several years
later....on a Carribean beach

Incidentally, My good South African surfing friend "Spange" (Andy Spangler), and his American wife,

'Spange' reading book....made best boards at
Jeffries Bay, SA.....photo Maroochydore, Australia

had decided to move on, (to the US), and the Apartheid system in South Africa was becoming frustratingly stifling.....even to the point, that if you engaged in an illegal gathering ie. (more than 2 cars in front of your house).....like a kids birthday party.....you could be arrested,.....and I had been arrested once, for surfing on a 'blacks only' beach,and a good surfing friend of mine committed suicide....being unable to marry the love of his life (a coloured woman).....as both were denied passports as well

Even the beaches were
segregated

freedom of movement was becoming heavily monitored and when I put my stereo systems, up for sale in an anti-apartheid activist's record shop (Paul Pretorius).....as his friend, I supposedly, became associated with his philosophy and activity, so was heavily police and Army monitored, as a possible terrorist, until the day we left little did i know that Paul was an ardent supporter of the Nelson Mandela ANC movement, and was printing anti-apartheid proganda pamphlets in the back of his shop.....i could well have joined Nelson Mandela at Robbin Island prison.....oh boy!!!!

But we felt that we couldn't bring our kids up in a country with such attitudethat attitude, just creeps on you unknowingly somehow

However, i was very enlightened to the African struggle of dignity....as I went about my job as a supervisor, of a large upmarket housing development, (supervisor...being white of course, set you apart in South Africa at that time)..... and noticed that the Bantu labourers, would come to work every day, in spotless 3 piece suits.....and jump in the muddy, often collapsing trenches and start digging..... covered in mud, by the end of the day.....but came to work next day again, ...spotless again...in their 3 piece suits again..... amazing!!!!

man did I learn a lot about dignity on that job

New Zealand

Caught an Italian cruise ship back to NZ, experiencing 15ft high lines of swells ...breaching the liner and causing her to plain on the breaching swells, and the ship would plain down into the trough of the wave.....just like surfing....but on a 50,000 ton liner.....was awesome fun....bit of spewing going on around the place,..... but thats ok

Tam & Bree playin it cool.....on a cruise
ship off to New Zealand 1975

Back in NZ, got a job, (and house provided) at the NZ Electricity local oil fired power station, cleaning up oil, and an awesome wave to boot

Mike 1981.....awesome Power
Station left hander.....all to ourselves

.....was given (an edge of the 60 acre property) outstation to clean (unsupervised...saw the Supervisor only twice in 3 months).....but oil all over me.....not very impressed...smelly.....oily pipes everywhererubbish everywhere.....cladding falling off the pipes everywherejust a nightmare.....surely I can get a better job than this....(no wonder I never saw the Supervisor)

Marsden oil fired power station

But anyway.....changed my attitude after lunch on the first day.....and decided to be the best cleaner upper at the powerstation.....decided to do a fantastic job.....change of attitude

Took me 3 months to clean up that little outstation.....cleaned all the 100 plus pipes spotless, cleaned the dozens of valves,even replaced the dirty oily metal on the roads, repaired all the cladding.....cleaned up all the rubbish everywhere

Then, one day I saw the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, 2 supervisors, Mechanical Engineer, and several Leading Hands, walk out towards this very isolated out-station

Fearing the worst.....i kinda hid.....but to my surprise, they began taking notes, and making remarks like, "I didn't know the oil flowed that way" and "so that what that valve is for"

Now they could see all the arrows, and instructions, and so forth, on all the pipes, and valves etc.....and they were like little school boys, finding out all this new information.....

I was totally staggeredbut then one of the Supervisors came up to me, and asked me if ide like to do another out-station...."you've done such as great job here"

This was mybelow average IQpoor schooling, lack of education, reply

" just give me 3 men, any cranes I want, fork lifts, trucks, diggers, and any materials I might need, road metal, and a Botanist gardener, compressors and shelving....and ill clean up this whole 60 acres, both the 10 story high turbine complex's and surrounding buildings.....and all the internal buildings"

He surprisingly agreed

I became a leading hand after just 3 months of being there

Took me and my crew 4 years.....cleaned the place up spotless....shrubs and flowers were a new addition....moral went up.. absenteeism went down...attitudes majorly improved....people were happy again....accidents went down

And to all the nearly 300 employees, I became the unofficial Chaplainso to speakeveryone started coming to me with their problems and attitudes.....and after 4 years I was called into the Mechanical Engineers office....where there were all the Supervising staff....and was asked to talk to all of the leadership, about attitude

Shortly after the Govt Minister of Energy and his entourage paid us a visit....to see why the moral had changed so much.....for the better

A year later or so, I had several building businesses on the go... 1982

one of my businesses.....

.....employing a lot of my friends.... Ime telling you all this,,,. Because, your upbringing (remember Bill at the beginning of the book), your IQ, your education, your financial status.....have nothing to do with success,.....or adventure....

I even got the plans for a Cessna kit-set aircraft.....collected parts, but ditched it after a short time.....to many legal scenarious involved.....legal complications, sheeeesh!Even created ,magnetic perpetual motion for a short stint...worked for 10 minutes, but alas, lost the formula in later years....bummer!

But its simply in your hands.....even today, a crippled old man like myself, can still learn new tricks, and learn from othersgoogle has endless information (that we never had....we had to go to the library)....so just educate yourself.....its free.....everything i've learnt and done, i've learnt from others.....

you dont have to be unique you know.....

but,just be the best...

I'll also show you how to start a business...if you want.....its easy for me now.....as i me mentioned before,.....have started 36 businesses.....so if your interested.....go to 'businesses' on the navigation bar

At the end of 1989 moved to West Australia.....did 50 bathroom renovations in a row....by myself...then went on to my most ambitious project.....doing it all myself....house and landscape that is

My wife designed it..... I then went ahead and drew the plans up.....took me 5 years to build the house, pool and landscaping.....with just a labourer (for some time, my son in law).....

law) labourertook 5 years

just me and (my son in

But it ended up in 2 books (on the full cover of one) and also on television, and was called ‘the 5 star hotel experience’ with a pool, large waterfall, 2 spas and total open living, with heated floors, etc.....all built by myself ..with help from the library, of courseand just watching tradesmen..... consequently,...learnt all the trades, and your welcome to build this entire house ,....and also learn all the trades...I’ll even show you how....(with more than 100 videos) also pool, special features and landscaping.....like I said, ill show you how...free ..just go to <https://buildyourownhomeyourself.com/>no strings attached.....to old for thatits just free tuition,including plans.....just wanna bless someone before i dieha!

ill show you how.....free!!

I built the pooleverything.....and

Do you think for a moment.....this hasn’t rubbed off on my kids

My 3 girls are highly motivated and successful

my 3 beautiful

(happy) girls.....30 years ago....

My eldest (and her family).....have lived in both camps.....of just enough to get by (helping people).....and to live in relative abundance.....is very hands on.....as you could imagine.....very capable, and fearless.....as are her married kids by the way, and husband

Today, Bree has an executive level position in a large company..... and of course,.....loves to travel,....and doesoften.....with the fam.....and is in Croatia at the moment (but lives in LA)....just lives to bless others

As does my middle one.....involved in youth groups for many years

Very artistically creative....has a business....’property styling’ does window design, and is extremely capable with her hands.....all 3 girls can use a powersaw with confidence and Tam is particularly gifted in 'mens' so-called professions ie. Building, creativity, and repairs.....also (locating to LA shortly)

Leah, my youngest (and her family)...are also entrepreneurial (who lives in LA as well) is extremely creative (once again). Is a singer songwriter, but has several businesses on the side, which are very successful.....goes under the name of ‘Leah Haywood’...and has written and produced songs for many artists, like Justin Bieber, Taylor swift, etc

So success in my book.....is just hands on....doing the hard yards and just educating yourself, and blessing others..... regardless of your age, race, colour, education (or lack

of).....everyone has that advantage these days..... Everyone with the internet and youtube, etc ...is ready to educate you.....or go out and watch a tradesmen....go to the library, or just read a book to get inspired....you'll be blessed and others will be blessed.....dont be hard on yourself.....life is meant to be an adventure (good or bad)

In 2015, I decided I wanted to bless all those who have shared in my surfing world for the last 55yrs.....so went about organising a (1960s) 4 day reunion, in my hometown..... which was attended by 150 of my friends(contact.....thanks to facebook ...ha!).....and many from overseas.....

Saturday...150 turned up.....awesome 1960s re-
anactment day.....2015 go
to <https://adventuresinparadisenz3.com/reunion-2015>

a quick get together Friday night (at the Lodge)

Saturday.....and to make it as authentic as possible..... had the contest at one of our favourite surf beaches....but a little down the beach, where no one was, and at a nice little 2-3ft peak.....lovely.....

No phones allowed.....only 60s boards.....no leg ropes...everyone dressed in 60s gear...60s music.....what an awesome day!!.....people actually talked to one another

Had 60s surf club games.....finished competing at 2pm.....snooze time....

back meeting at a lodge at 7.....snacks and prizegiving.....messages to our long-time surfers.....from our Hawaiian friends, also Rabbit, Doug Warbrick, Tom Carrol, Midget Farrelly, etc....personal messages to our friends, from the legends.....managed to catch up with many of them at certain times, and made their messages personal to my friends, which was a nice touch from them

it reads.....'Don and Ross..the legend Edge
brothers...we love you guys'..Midget Farrellygo
to <https://adventuresinparadisenz3.com/reunion-2018>

Sunday.....memorabilia day....heaps of 60s and 70s stuff at the beach

Monday...free surf together (those who could).....awesome catch uplike old times!!

Did it again in 2018.....but just had a days surf together....followed in the evening by 70s music.....was not hard to organise...but we will all have, long time memories.....

Just another adventure to make everybody's day

Elton John, The Tavares, Santana, Steppenwolf, Michael Jackson.....'you know the drill'...and a fire on the beach (legally)...awesome fun...about 50 of the surfing crowd.....fantastic!!

and they'll live

forever....Ha!!

You've only got 80+years on this earth.....make it count...and you don't need money or education.....cause its actually.....all about everyone else

(and check out 'businesses' if your interested.....i'll show you how to start a business)

Have a great day

Aloha

Mike

Mike.....and his last wave....Malibu California.....nice spot to finish
my 55yr surfing career 2014

one of the iconic photos of all

time.....Dora immortalised