



My rambles from the Rainbow Nation – South Africa.

November 2000 No. 4

**Hi Everyone.**

Time is flying very fast – I have now been here for over 4 months! Workwise everything is much the same but going well. Pete & Dee Cresswell (kiwis who are VSA's South African field reps) did a review of all the volunteers work here and then they took Camille (another vol. here) and myself to Cape Town for a weeks holiday. This was an awesome time ... I have included an account of the week there a bit further on.

Each day though brings on a new experience here. With the warmer weather coming on I am now having to contend with cockroaches as well as the usual ants and lizards. I turned on the bath tap the other day and a cockroach popped out. The weather is becoming very hot – I was amused when one of my workmates told our general manager that I needed air-conditioning in my car, she said "He is gonna die without air-conditioning, he is gonna die!". I think her concern for my welfare worked as our manager told her to get some quotes for air-conditioning! Another friend was telling me that during February when it's very hot, they have the ceiling fans on high ... I had to confess to him that I have the ceiling fans on high now!

I am constantly amazed here by how many people you can fit into a car! ... taxis seem to break the world record time and time again here ... even my humble little Astra sometimes manages to fit 6 or 7 people in it!

Everybodies names seems to get shortened or altered in some way here and mine is no exception. My Xhosa name is Khalipha, but I have also been given other names here like KK ( a very common one) and Superkid. Superkid came from some Xhosa friends who decided I needed to go through some Xhosa orientation process

(about 5 days) before I could be classed as a man! Been young sometimes has it's drawbacks!! ... especially in a culture where age is important.

### **CAPE TOWN VENTURES – AN ACCOUNT OF SNAILS, FEET, STICKS & JOBBIES!**

Let me introduce 'the gang' to you.



**'Passionate Snail Hunting Pete':** Pete is a typical middle-aged bloke with an unusual passion though for snails. Wherever he goes there is usually a snail hunting expedition included in the itinerary. Along the way he usually inspires others accompanying him to delve into leaf litter and rocks in search of these wonderful creatures. His wife 'Dee Not My Feet Cresswell' is an amazingly tolerant individual, who also ends up searching every nook and cranny for Pete's beloved snails.

**'Dee Not My Feet Cresswell':** This extraordinary individual as mentioned follows Passionate Pete wherever he ventures. However Dee Not My Feet Cresswell has her own passions – however her passion is for the famous South African biltong. To those kiwis and others who have not had the opportunity to try this, biltong is a very

meaty tasting dried South African meat, which all South Africans chew at regular intervals. Dee Not My Feet Cresswell's name was bestowed upon her, when her beloved Passionate Pete wanted to take her photo time after time and the rest of the gang would here the familiar cry 'Not my feet Pete ... not my feet!'.

**'Camille Jobbie Kirtlan':** Camille is a VSA volunteer stuck in the middle of South Africa and coping very well with the other volunteer Caleb. This persevering

young lass also has an unusual passion

....

'Jobbies'.

During the Cape Town expedition the rest of the gang learnt a great deal about jobbies.

'Look at those wee jobbies

over there', 'Hey there's a jobbie thingy me jig'. We were to learn that the jobbie was a very diverse creature ... sometimes it resembled a snail, baboon or some other kind of jobbie.

**'Caleb Early Rising Smith':** This young lad is the final addition to this gang. Caleb's passion's extend to other things such as plants, animals and sticks! Well not quite literally ... but we'll talk about the sticks later. Caleb was well known for his passion of rising early .... Not! His poor system was completely in shock mode with the 6-6:30 am rises, which the rest of the gang conjured up every morning. He really only recovered from this status of shock sometime later in the morning, when his system told him it really was time to get going!

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October**

Early rise, something which Caleb was going to get very used to! Our first stop was at Jeffries Bay where the wind was howling and



**Storm River Gorge**

Passionate Pete braved the storm in search of his beloved snails. The rest of the gang (quite certain that he was mad) went in search of some very necessary food. Too bad that the power was off in the town ... and almost every shop was closed. After managing to find some buns and dragging Pete back into the car, the gang set off again to stop a bit later at the Storm River gorge. This amazingly beautiful gorge is made of unusual rocks ... time for a few photos. It was here at that photo session that 'Dee Not My feet Cresswell' would begin her cry of 'Not my feet Pete, not my feet'!

After a short walk at the mouth of the Storm River (in a National Park) and after our first official snail hunting expedition, we were set to continue our journey. Next stop was at a tollgate – 7 Rands (about NZ \$2.20) to cover the next stretch of road ... not too bad, but seeing we were paying we were expecting no potholes or bumps in the road! The 7 Rands paid off, as us gullible tourists were soon parting with our fruit to a baboon who decided we were worth making friends with ... even if it was just for the food! After posing his good looks our way for a couple of photos he suddenly fell in love with our driver Camille and tried to get into the car beside her. Not this time my friend! After further travel, we reached our destination for the night, Kynser (pronounced Nyzner). After looking around for a bit, the gang decided to spend the night at a train themed lodge. Camille & Caleb had 2 tiny caboose cabins to get used too ... room enough to breath anyway. After getting used to toileting in the shower and showering in the toilet, both emerged from their respective cabooses 'Happy as Larry' (a Passionate Pete Phrase) the next morning.

### **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October**

The gang spent the morning at the ocean head, climbing rocks, looking at birds in some lagoons and fossicking for snails. Time to move on again



**Typical Cape Dutch Architecture**

and after a few scenic stops on the way, we



stopped for a bit at Swellendam in the afternoon. This quirky little town had some beautiful Cape Dutch architecture, which was beautiful with its mountainous backdrop.

From here it was onto South Africa's whale watching Capital Hermanus. This was a bit of a whale tale – literally! We saw a few whale tales in the distance, but nothing as dramatic as the guide books had us believing. It was still a novelty seeing whales though. That night we all went to a pizza place for tea, where some of the gang imagined the gay waiter had an interest in Caleb, after raving on and on about his good choice in food. Caleb wasn't too inclined to agree with them however! Passionate Pete, not wanting to miss out on the action then decided to have the same pizza on the menu as Caleb.

### **Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October**

After staying at a very nice Bed & Breakfast place, the gang set off to conquer the Fernkloof Nature Reserve Mountain. This is an awesome place and the wildflowers were everywhere in full bloom. Caleb was delighted to encounter his first snake ever ... even if it was a small one. For the rest of the holiday he spent time looking in rocks for snakes, much to Camille's disgust. These were 'jobbies' which she really didn't want to encounter. Pete & Dee fossicked around for snails, while Camille and Caleb climbed to the top of the mountain. The climb was well worth it and the effort paid off with some wonderful views of the coastline and yes ... we could see more whale tails in the distance!

Anyway the troop had to reluctantly leave this place and carried on to Cape Town. This part of the journey was well worth it –



Leucospermums growing wild

even more so than the much-overrated Garden Route. Guidebooks raved about the garden route (which the gang had previously travelled on) – sure it was nice .... but ..... anyway –



Cape Town – A View From the Table Mount

maybe we're too spoilt in New Zealand with a 'garden route' wherever we go in the country. Huge rock cliffs and the sea dominated the landscape for the rest of the journey to Cape Town.

At last Cape Town! We were first greeted with miles of squatter camps – it is a tragedy how people have to live in this

state – everyone

just drives past these places day after day, without giving them a thought! After passing through this area and ugly and smelly industrial areas, we found ourselves in the heart of Cape Town. What a contrast! The place is very beautiful – the sea in the forefront and the Table mountain forming a backdrop. After finding our guest-house for the rest of the week, the gang decided to check out the Cape Point National Park in the afternoon ..... easier said than done! After getting hopelessly lost, we then found the road which we were travelling on to get there was blocked! Caleb's navigational skill's had the gang then taking a turn 1 too soon and we were then happily (or grumpily ... depending on whose perspective!) on our way back to Cape Town. This proved to be a blessing in disguise, as there was traffic for miles going in the direction that we had wanted to go – we would never had got there in time, or had any time to have a proper look ... oh well – there's always another day!

### **Wednesday**

On Wednesday the troop decided to conquer the Table Mount ..... After a bit Dee & Pete decided to take the Cable Car up, while Camille & Caleb decided to walk up the mountain. That is, Pete decided on the cable car, until he got to the place where the cable car was leaving from – Steep and a loooooong way up! Anyway after this we found out that the Cable Car was closed, due to the weather. Pete and Dee decided to join Caleb & Camille to walk up the mountain. Camille strided up the mountain, as if she had been do-

ing this all of her life. Caleb started out well, but then decided that the macho image of trying to keep up with Camille was not worth it and went at his own pace. Pete & Dee also decided they too would take their time and leisurely strolled along the track ... of course looking for snails along the way.

Caleb eventually caught up to Camille and carried on climbing and of course Caleb had to look in the rocks for snakes .... again much to Camille's disgust. After much hard work climbing Caleb & Camille stopped to talk to a guide who told them not to go to the top, as the weather was too bad, with mist and howling winds. This was a disappointment as both Camille & Caleb were almost at the top .... we felt a bit cheated!

Anyway after meeting up with Dee & Pete, the gang then decided to head off to the Cape Point National Park. This was well worth the effort though there was far too much human devel-

opment in this national park. Cable cars took people up and down a tiny hill ... unbelievable when people have legs! The alternative route was even wheel-chair friendly. The gang was able to say they had been to the southern most point of Africa. It was very interesting to watch some cormorants with nests on the side of a huge cliff ... how they and their nests managed to stay intact in this very windy place is a mystery. The baby chicks had to get their first time of trying to fly right, otherwise they had a rather unfortunate ending, on the rocks and the sea far below.



**Rock Cliffs At The Table Mount**

By this time some members of the gang had metamorphosed from an 'office white' to a 'glorious pink' in a colour. Photos and video shots reveal this almost too conspicuously! The gang then headed back to Cape Town, on the way Caleb discovered some kudu (deer like animals) .... The limited eyesight of the rest of the gang meant they weren't able to see the kudu and insisted that the objects were sticks! (or maybe 'jobbies') Anyway Caleb's pride was personally at stake and thus he was quite adamant that these were kudu in the distance!

#### **Thursday**

Thursday morning saw the gang waiting at the Cape Town waterfront to go out to Robbin Island – the island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years. This experience proved to be a bit of a flop – there were far too many tourists and far too much development. With development occurring for tourists benefits, this place seemed much different to how it would have been at the time when Mandela was imprisoned. The walls of the prisons had been freshly painted and nice paving had been put down at the front of the prison – I am sure it was not a very nice place, when Mandela was there! A Tour Guide drove us around parts of the island on a bus ... again to touristy for us ... probably some people enjoy the 'tourist experience' like that. We saw where Mandela worked in the quarry during his time on the island – in light clothing for both summer and winter, when this place got deathly hot or cold. As a result of working in this quarry Mandela has permanent eye injuries - This was a result of the bright sun reflection of the limestone rock each day, and of course the prisoners (& the guards) were not allowed sunglasses for protection.

In the afternoon after returning by boat to the mainland, the troop set off around the winelands



**Prison on Robbin Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned**

around Stellenbosch. This is a picturesque area with vineyards set in a backdrop of hills. Here we

wandered around the afternoon looking at different vineyards. That night we had dinner at the Cape Town waterfront – this is a beautiful spot, but very windy and very expensive!

### **Friday**

Our last day in Cape Town – today we went north a few hours to the West Coast National Park. Unfortunately nobody checked the fuel gauge before we left and soon we were wandering around a town in the whops called Albertina, hopelessly trying to find some petrol. After mindlessly venturing through a bizarre industrial area, which seemed to have more street lights than East London!, we eventually came across a garage a bit further on, much to everyone's relief – this would be an interesting place to get stuck with no petrol!

Anyway we were soon on the main highway again heading for the West Coast National Park. This is reputed as been one of the best places for wild flowers and also wetland birdlife in South Africa. Unfortunately we didn't see much of either – we had missed the flowers by a week or two. However there were heaps of tortoises roaming the roads and we also saw a few interesting birds and also small deer like animals ... some of these latter unfortunately ended up victims dead on the road, though they have a habit of jumping out in front of cars. It was also a case of dodge the tortoises on the road. We were a little disappointed with this park, but if we had come a



**Rock Rabbit On The Top Of The Table Mount**

few weeks earlier, when the flowers were in full bloom, our view may have been quite different – some guidebooks raved about this place. At our last stop in this park we saw some more 'whale tails' which perked everybody's morale's up considerably apart from Pete who was lost in his world of snails and shells on the beach.

Back to Cape Town and the wind had died down

meaning the Cable Cars to the Table Mount were operational. Soon Camille, Dee and Caleb were soon on their way to the top ... Pete still didn't like the look of those cable cars. But the view at the top was simply awesome, we watched the town of Cape Town finish work for

the day as the sun went down and mist crept up the mountain side – this

seemed like heaven – the sun creating a golden sea and the mist created a magic in this still quiet heaven. It was amazing that this place was not windy, when for the rest of the week, Cape Town had been howling with wind – we were very fortunate. Camille and Caleb ventured down part of the track, part of where they would have finished climbing a couple of days earlier .... Caleb anyway didn't feel quite so cheated that he had now reached the top.

### **Saturday**

Time to say goodbye to this beautiful city – unfortunately both Pete & Dee were on their way back to New Zealand in a month's time ... but who knows, they may return for another Capetonian experience. This was mainly a day of travel, though we were very fortunate to see lots of baboons on the side of the road. Just after lunch we stopped to have a look at the Cango Caves.



**View Of Mist & Mountains On Top Of The Table Mount**



**View To Cape Town From Robbin Island**



These magnificent underground creations were very worthwhile stopping for. In the past concerts were held in these caves, but vandalism has stopped that – This is a shame, as this would be an amazing place for concerts. Following this short stop we had to try and find a place to stay for the night in the middle of nowhere. We ended up in a small Afrikaans rural town called Joubertina. We went to a farm to seek a Bed & Breakfast for the night. The farmhouse had skins and game heads of every description posted around the living room ... this reeked of death! Fortunately the B & B wasn't this way inclined and was a nice Cape Dutch

styled House. Next priority was to look for dinner or supper, as it's known here. After driving round the rather empty streets of this wee town, we finally found a place to eat – the owners told us to visit the local pub as the model car display was a must! In we went telling the owner we had come all the way from New Zealand to see his famous model car display!

The next morning we were set to return to East London. This was a fabulous journey and Cape Town is a must for any prospective traveller. We also learnt a lot about snails, feet, sticks and 'jobbies'!



**Cango Caves**

All my photos from Cape Town will be put on the web shortly if you want to see them:  
<http://caleb.smith.tripod.com>