

**2006 – no idea where it went, but we do know that it was sensational!**

....and resuming the narrative of our lives where the last chapter ended.... Leisa and I jetted out of Sydney aboard Aerolineas Argentinas on December 16 last year and thus began one of the most singular and memorable experiences its been my privilege to undertake. Despite the fairly horrendous 30 hours it took us to arrive in **Ushuaia** (southernmost city in the world) at the tip of Tierra del Fuego in Argentina, we boarded the **Polar Pioneer** on schedule and struck out across the infamous **Drake Passage** on the first stage of our ten days in the driest, coldest, most remote and least populous continent on earth. Of course there is nowhere near sufficient space here for me to do justice to the towering magnificence of **Antarctica** – I can simply state that it is unique and quite, quite spectacular. I maintained a detailed journal and, since returning to the world of electronic gismos, have produced an illustrated log of our trip if you are interested in the daily activities and perusing a small sample of the 400+ images we captured (*pdf available at [www.hennessea.com](http://www.hennessea.com)*)



Gentoo penguin & new chick

Leisa & I kitted for kayaking



we were this close to the orcas!

We disembarked at Ushuaia January 27 and flew the same afternoon to **Buenos Aires** (BA) to begin the warm-weather sector of our adventure – it was analogous to being thrust from a blast freezer into a fan-forced oven! Although we did enjoy many of the sights of BA, it's not a destination I would recommend to anyone considering visiting **Argentina** – with the exception of a few imposing/unusual monuments, the city offers nothing of architectural merit, whilst the shopping/dining/historical attractions are largely unimpressive to anyone who has been to Paris, Rome, Madrid or any small Australian outback town! And don't even contemplate wasting an entire day + more than US\$250 by crossing the filthy **Rio de la Plata** to **Colonia del Sacramento!** I'll

just have return someday to witness the mighty **Iguaçu Falls** and other outstanding geographical features. After three nights in BA we departed without a backward glance for our final destination in South America

i.e. like Carmen Miranda, we were flying up to **Rio!** Now this is serious eye-candy of the geographical persuasion and the visitor is continually gob-smacked, from their first sight of the place until departure.

From the commanding and always visible figure of **Christ the Redeemer** atop the towering granite monolith of **Corcovado** to the wide, golden beaches encircling most perimeters of the city, **Rio de Janeiro** is visually stunning – in fact, no amount of research or perusal of photographs really prepares one for the impact of Rio. Although we were not present for its most famous event (**Carnival** is held in the lead-up to Easter), New Year's Eve is almost as well-attended and certainly as involving for the *cariooca*, who turn out in force and celebrate for more than twenty-fours non-stop, particularly on the beaches and specifically at **Copacabana**, where we were staying.



the Obelisco in Buenos Aires

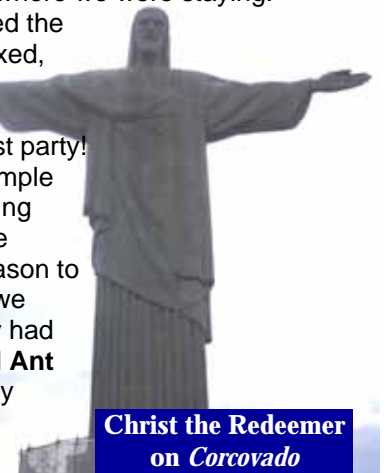
However, despite the fact that more than two million people crowded the beach to watch the fireworks at midnight, the atmosphere was relaxed, happy and completely benign – we saw no violence or even unacceptable shows of alcohol-fuelled exuberance – it was first

and foremost a family affair and we were truly delighted to have been included in the world's largest party!

Although it transpired that the day of our arrival was the best weather-wise, we still managed to sample the sweeping vistas from the peaks of Corcovado and **Sugar Loaf**, as well as many of the interesting sights at ground level, even though we were soaked to the skin a couple of times. Sadly, due to the inclement weather, I did not immerse my body in the Atlantic off Copacabana, so that's another reason to return to Rio on our way to exploring the rest of **Brazil** someday. Of course all this happened and we

were home in Sydney by the first week in January, so the year was only in its infancy and I already had a major journey under my belt whilst the Bear and poodle had shared Christmas with **Kathryn and Ant** and done as little as possible in my absence! January was particularly wonderful as it brought many dear friends/rellies: after a fabulous time in Western Australia, **Moira and Peter** made their first visit to Fawly Towers....**Toni Back** was also in Sydney house/dog sitting for her brother John.....

and **Terry Slyer** stayed with us after playing golf with Noel at Oatlands in searing heat.



Christ the Redeemer on Corcovado

**my panorama of Rio de Janeiro from the summit of Pão de Açucar i.e. Sugar Loaf**



- Leme beach
- Ipanema
- Copacabana beach
- Morro da Urca
- Corcovado & Jesus Dude
- Botafogo beach
- Santa Tereza
- Flamengo beach
- Catedral Metropolitana
- Carioca/Centro
- Santos Dumont airport
- Rio-Noteroi bridge

**Moira & Terry stressed out**



We all enjoyed a fantastic day on **Sydney Harbour** – we hired a self-drive boat from a marina at Rose Bay and puttered about amongst the floating filthy rich, downing fizzy and eating all manner of yummy titbits as well as taking a dip (me) in the sparkling water. Goes to show that in this most egalitarian of societies, anyone can do it. **Rob and Sheryl Ross** also made their maiden visit to Castle Hill in January and somehow we managed a full day watching Australia perform brilliantly at the SGB, courtesy of Metcash, Noel's lovely client. The entertaining flowed seamlessly into February with **Steve & Irene Edwards** and **Sheri McCarthy** visiting us, and then **Colleen & Frank Romano**, the Bear & I all descending on **Toni & Rod** in Queensland whilst Kathryn & Ant treated the poodle to a weekend on their country estate. With a couple of notable exceptions, March and April are now a bit of a blur i.e. I spent some time at Forster with my Kiwi cousin **Amanda**

**Lane** who was over to help out whilst both **Betty and Bob** were hospitalised, and (for his birthday) I took the Bear for a flight over Sydney in a DC-3, which was totally fantastic – the views were awesome as it was a perfect autumn day. Suddenly it was May and Noel was about to depart on yet another Metcash jaunt, this time to **South Africa**. Fortunately, Toni and Rod dropped in on their way home from a whistle-stop tour of most of south-eastern Australia (*gotta love retirement!*) in time to see him off and console me in his absence, so I managed to deal with being left behind (just) even though it meant that he beat me to the **Dark Continent**. To further console myself, I flew up to the **Sunshine Coast** for Mothers Day and **Moira** and I had a wonderful day with **Mum**. Although his itinerary did not cover a large geographic area, Noel loved every moment, particularly



**the Duncombes do Icebergs**



**Boatie Bear!**

his first close encounters with **elephant, rhino, giraffe** and **zebra** from open-sided safari vehicles. He was blown away by the sheer opulence of the **Palace at Sun City** (where they stayed and he played a round of golf) and really warmed to the black African people with whom he came into contact, particularly the safari guides. They packed a crowded schedule into five days and the Bear returned waxing eloquent about the whole experience and (finally) enlisted in our forthcoming family trip .....which brings me to the undisputed highlight of our year, **The Carrick Africa Safari**,



**St Ursula's 'old' girls together at Coomera**



**our view of Icebergs at Bondi from the DC-3**

so named because it was principally funded by my **Mum**. As many of you are aware, I have been attempting to organise a trip to the **Okavango Delta** in **Botswana** for nearly fifteen years, but when it appeared as though budgets and school holidays were going to scupper our plans yet again, Mum came to the rescue and stumped up most of the (substantial) costs for her three kids and one of her grand children i.e. Angus. **Moira, Noel** and I left Sydney on Bastille Day and **Damien, Shena** and **Angus** were there to greet us when we landed in **Johannesburg** fourteen hours later. The next morning we took a commercial flight to **Maun** and transferred to a light aircraft (**Moremi Air**) for the final leg to **Pom Pom camp** in the heart of the Okavango Delta – and so our safari began!

have been attempting to organise a trip to the **Okavango Delta** in **Botswana** for nearly fifteen years, but when it appeared as though budgets and school holidays were going to scupper our plans yet again, Mum came to the rescue and stumped up most of the (substantial) costs for her three kids and one of her grand children i.e. Angus. **Moira, Noel** and I left Sydney on Bastille Day and **Damien, Shena** and **Angus** were there to greet us when we landed in **Johannesburg** fourteen hours later. The next morning we took a commercial flight to **Maun** and transferred to a light aircraft (**Moremi Air**) for the final leg to **Pom Pom camp** in the heart of the Okavango Delta – and so our safari began!



**little drummer Bear!**

I really struggle to do justice to the wonder that is **Africa**, or the magical, breathtaking delight at seeing African animals in the wild for the first time – its everything its cracked up to be, and then some. The Delta is a unique environment with the animals' lives following a different pattern to those in most other parts of Africa, principally because of the annual flood plain caused by the inundation of the **Okavango River** as it completes its thousand mile journey from the mountains of **Angola** and eventually soaks away into the sands of the **Kalahari Desert**. **Pom Pom** camp is surrounded by permanent water, the level of which varies according to the season, but the main lodge building and the individual accommodation tents are all sited well above the high water mark and safely accessed during daylight hours, though they do insist on an armed escort after dark – it all adds to the excitement! We reluctantly departed **Pom Pom** after three truly special days and were transported in two light aircraft (1.5 hour flight) to **Kasane** airport at the north-eastern border of Botswana, where we were collected and driven on bitumen roads to **Muchenje Lodge**, situated on a high escarpment overlooking the **Chobe River** and the river flats of neighbouring **Namibia**. Although we were still technically in the same country, the two camp environments and the terrain through which we travelled by both car and boat on our safaris was completely different and thus the experiences were equally diverse – we were very grateful to **African Encounter** (our travel agents) for these excellent choices of venue.

**memories & animals from Pom Pom**

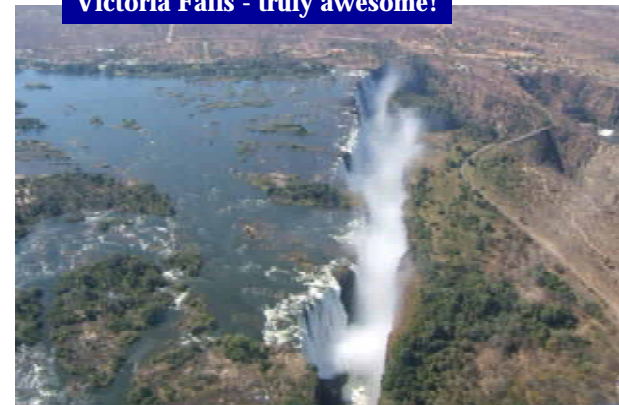


**our guides were FABULOUS!**

magnificent pachyderm at Chobe



Victoria Falls - truly awesome!



Big B'wana Bear!



Shena & I were mounted on big Denny

Considering we only had two nights at **Muchenje**, we packed an incredible amount into the time – early morning game drives/late night game drives/half a day boating on the **Chobe River**/a visit to an African village/sundowners by the river/drinks around the camp fire and more food than even Damien could manage to eat! Like *Pom Pom*, the camp managers and staff were absolutely brilliant and could sure teach people in other parts of the world a thing or two about how to make the punters feel welcome and important (*the UK, Holland & Argentina would probably top my list of places for them to start!*) Before we knew it, we were once again on our way back to Kasane airport, where we were met and transported by mini-bus and ferry across the border into **Zambia** and thence to **Livingstone** and our hotels at **Victoria Falls** – a mind-boggling array of experiences to have telescoped into less than a week! The main problem about describing this trip is that I'm running out of superlatives - what words can really bring to life the sheer splendour of the **Zambezi River** as it plummets nearly a thousand metres over a crevasse almost two kilometres long, sending smoke-like plumes of water vapour hundreds of metres into the sky above? No wonder the Zambians call Vic Falls **'the smoke that thunders'**! Here again, we wasted no time lounging about, although the environs of the **Royal Livingstone** certainly put one in that frame of mind – it is luxurious and the beautifully presented grounds overlook the wide

river as it slides past on its way to the Falls while **zebra, giraffe and vervet monkeys** are literally within reach (though touching is actively discouraged) everywhere one walks. In the course of our 2.5 days we took a helicopter ride over the falls (stunning) an elephant-back safari (gorgeous) a twilight cruise on the **Africa Queen** (delightful) and shopped/bargained our little hearts out at two different markets (great fun)! Before we knew it, our family time together was over and a rather subdued party flew back to Jo'burg, where Damien's lot checked into a hotel while they waited for their late night flight to London and Moira, Noel and I boarded SAA to **Capetown** in a rather melancholy frame of mind.

We were very impressed with the **Victoria & Alfred Hotel** where we stayed on the waterfront – the breakfast spread was superb, particularly as it included limitless quantities of fizzy! Unlike the London Carricks who had visited Capetown before we all met up, we were extremely fortunate with

Table Mountain dominates Capetown & Table Bay



a Bear (with fully functioning limbs) enjoying the spectacular road around False Bay



the weather and enjoyed sunny, balmy days – apparently quite unusual for that time of the year. The scenery in the **Western Cape** is spectacular, with sheer granite cliffs rising (it seems) directly out of the sea. During the two days we had a hire car, we explored most of area including **Stellenbosch, Cape of Good Hope, Hermanus** and the shoreline of huge **False Bay**. The only disappointment was that the operators had chosen the week of our visit to close the **Table Mountain** cable car for maintenance, so we were denied the iconic views which accompany any tourist advice for Capetown – someday I might just forgive them enough to give it another go!

we did not encounter ostriches in the wild, but these ones at Cape Point were fierce enough for me!

a personal milestone..... my travels during the past twelve months have taken me to Antarctica, South America and Africa - so **I have now set foot on every continent in the known world!**



Hudson thought dressing as a leopard would get him a trip to Africa!



And so, after just TWO amazing weeks in Africa, it was back to Oz, Hudson & Bette who had once again volunteered to move into Fawley Towers and ensure that our affairs (and our poodle) were in the best of all possible hands in our absence. Then suddenly August was upon us and the Bear had decided to fulfil a lifelong fantasy and purchase a **Harley Davidson**, specifically the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition Heritage Softail owned by **Jim Mitchell** in Brisbane. I was very apprehensive about Noel undertaking a thousand kilometre ride on an unfamiliar motorbike alone, so the circus hit the road north and used the opportunity to deliver Bette to her home on the Sunshine Coast before collecting the bike and heading south with Hudson and I travelling in the Ford support vehicle i.e. my car. We took the journey in easy stages with the Bear riding no more than 1.5 hours in any one stretch (stayed overnight in Coffs Harbour) and nearly made it home – we were just 20 minutes away! The Bear decided to have one final rest stop, took a narrow



bent Harley & damaged Bear paw + pins

side road off the freeway, decided it was TOO narrow, turned around and collected a guard rail on the way back out . . . I will spare you the gory details – suffice to say he had broken bones in his right hand and right knee, severe bruising on his lower torso and legs, and the noble **Harley is a write-off**. Hardly surprisingly, our buoyant year came to an abrupt hiatus – the Bear was unable to drive/bath himself/cut his food or do anything else useful for over two months, as he was trussed up long before it was time for a Christmas turkey! Three months on, our lives are slowly returning to normal – the pins have been removed from his hand and the latest scans show everything is healing nicely – but the long term casualty has been Noel's golfing career as he is still unable to grip a club and is unlikely to trouble a course until (at least) late January. Its probably best that I keep my thoughts on the subject of motorbikes to myself, but rest assured, if my opinion counts for anything, hell WILL freeze over before he gets another one!



the leaning Bear of Windsor with Pammy + safer transport

Typically I am now running out of room, so will summarise some notable events amongst our friends which may be of interest to those who know each other....several important people had a birthday ending in 'oh' this year – **Pam Cooke** did it in Canada at **Lake Louise**.....**Deni Schutt** celebrated at **Mosman** .... **Hudson Poodle** astounded us all by turning **ten**....**Rod Back** chose **Ayers Rock** to do it with **Toni** .... but **Mary Harris** took out the quinella by marrying **Denis Patton** at the same party! Speaking of weddings – **Leisa** made an honest man out of **Richard Aldridge** and **David Gilchrist** wed **Anna**, qualifying her as the only person we know

Rod & his chick at the Rock



who hails from **Belarus**! Both **Chris Wadeson** and **Mike Barrett** have been regular guests at Fawley Towers this year and, on one momentous occasion, even managed to book in together on a night **Bette** was also in residence, so we had to issue them with room numbers and the bottle bin was the talk of the street that week! Most recently we have re-established contact with my **cousin Frank** and his wife **Helen** who live in **Kenmore** (Brisbane suburb) and with whom I am feverishly exchanging copies of old photographs in an effort to properly chronicle the **Carrick family history** before it passes irrevocably from living memory. We will be celebrating Christmas at home, together, for the first time since we moved to Castle Hill in company with our dear friends **Toni and Rod** who are driving down with their pooches and will be joined by **Colleen Romano** to see in the New Year - should be sensational! Despite the rather sorry state of the world, we hope the year has treated you well, that your friends and extended families are happy and healthy and your Christmas is everything you could wish for!



the Kenmore Carricks

Rob  
Martin  
Patrick  
Helen  
Frank

with all our love **Gabrielle , Noel & Hudson**

**the happy couples! (L-R)**

- **Anna & David did it in York**
- **Denis & Mary did it at a party**
- **Richard & Leisa chose Observatory Hill**



**and now for the weather.....**

If anyone has any lingering doubts about the detrimental effects of climate change/greenhouse gas emissions/global warming, consider some of the bizarre conditions we have experienced in New South Wales alone this year:

- more than 96% of the state is drought-declared
- we recorded the **hottest** September day in 120 years i.e. 42°C
- we then recorded the **coldest** November day ever i.e. 11°C



you can read the diaries and look at many more photos of my trips to Antarctica and South America as pdfs on our website [www.hennessea.com](http://www.hennessea.com) and check for our Africa Safari in early 2007!

