



Barry Krowne's Journal of Mt. Kilimanjaro Climb
August 20, 2009 - August 25, 2009

Day 1

I was picked up at Kim's house at 9:50AM. They came in a van, Mussa (my guide) was driving and he was accompanied by David (the cook) and four porters. So together we were going to comprise a "team" of seven.

We drove to Machame Gate. Machame is one of the eight routes you can take to climb the mountain. It is very popular and considered one of the toughest. It lends itself to a six day climb, with one day mostly devoted to altitude acclimatization.

We signed in at the Ranger Station, filling out paper work and signing the climbers log book. We did all of the provision organization (loads of food, camping gear, etc.) and I set out at 11:50 AM. This day we were to hike to Machame Camp, located just above the rain forest at 3,000 meters. It was quite wet in the rain forest with a light and constant mist and occasional rain. I was hiking in an REI wicking short sleeve shirt, since the temperature was comfortable. This day's climb took three hours and forty-five minutes. Mussa said I was "running". That was not so. But I found I was comfortable moving at a healthy pace and didn't stop very often to rest and when I did, it was only for 30 seconds to a minute so I could more easily drink. During this first day, I ended up coming upon a group of six climbers, five from Spain and one from the UK. The one from the UK was a girl, named Helen, and she was frustrated that her climb tour arrangements had her added into a group of only Spaniards who could not talk to her since she did not speak Spanish and they did not speak English. Helen and I seemed to move at the same pace, so we broke off from her group and moved ahead together. She was happy to have someone to talk to and we held a spirited conversation for the next hour or more.

With my climb time of three hours forty-five minutes, I actually beat Hans (the porter) and David to camp. That meant my full pack was not in camp, in my tent, ready for me when I got to camp. That was not supposed to happen. However, I had to proceed up the trail about five minutes to the Ranger station to sign the log book. As I was signing, I saw from the book that at age 57, I was the oldest climber. After signing and using the toilet (more on these later) I came back down the trail to our camp site and my pack had arrived and was now in my tent. This was good and I immediately got out of my hiking boots and socks and into more comfortable foot wear. Later that night, Mussa told me there were 76 climbers that set out from Machame Gate this day, with porters and cooks numbering around 300. So that meant the trail had "traffic". The trail was not wide and so many times, when the porters come up behind you, you move off the trail or to the side to let them pass. Simply put, the climbers break camp in the morning and head out first, and once the porters break down the tents and pack the gear, they hit the trail at a pace



designed to pass the climbers so they can get to the next camp and set everything back up before the climbers arrive. The porters were absolutely amazing to watch. They have to carry gear on their backs and on their heads. They move quickly, come in all sizes but are mostly large young men, and they work their butts off. I quickly came to admire and appreciate them!

Camp was abuzz with activity and the hum was one of excitement with everyone glad the first day's climb was done and we were all on our way. Dinner was great- David proved early on that he was a great cook. Before sunset, the sky cleared and we could see Mt. Kilimanjaro and where we were ultimately heading. It was an awesome sight and looked so far away. I found myself in awe of the beauty of it all. I took some nice pictures at first light the following morning, about 6 AM.

This first night at Machame Camp was my first night camping and staying in a tent. I mean ever!! It was the first time I had slept in a sleeping bag as well. I was setting several firsts on this trip, and these turned out to only be the beginning. It was pitch black in the tent and without a flashlight or head light, I couldn't see my own hand held right in front of my face. It was strange to be in a tent, truly alone with just my own thoughts. I found this both peaceful and lonely. It was easy to think, to wonder, how the next days were going to develop and how I would find the climb.

I was taking Diamox, a prescription medicine that is supposed to help with altitude sickness. I started taking it after dinner this first night. One of the more common side effects is that the drug acts like a diuretic. So on the one hand, I was supposed to drink about four liters of water a day to help with altitude sickness and on the other hand I was peeing like crazy because of the drug. The first night, I was up almost every hour and a half or so, peeing in a bottle in my tent. Using a bottle in the tent was a lot easier than getting out of a tent to use a toilet. This avoided having to put on shoes or boots, a jacket, carry a flashlight or head lamp, unzip my tent- both the inside and outside and make my way to a toilet, which was a hole in the ground, and doing so while it was pitch black outside. So my first night camping was an interesting experience and, unfortunately, it did not include a lot of sleep.

Day 2

I was up at 5:45 AM, after not sleeping very well. I got myself ready to move out by the planned 8 AM start time. I had a great breakfast as David was proving his worth once again- porridge, fried egg, and toast. We didn't leave camp until 8:25 AM and were heading to Shira camp, located at 3,900 meters. The plan Mussa and I agreed upon was to hike the whole way and not stop for lunch. It took us four hours to make the climb to Shira camp. This day's climb was considerably harder than yesterday's. The climb was steep, almost immediately once we left Machame Camp, and it remained steep for two or more straight hours. The terrain was rocky and there were many moments of heavy climbing as opposed to hiking. Early on into the climb, I decided to break out my hiking

poles, which I had not yet used. In all of my training, I had only used poles to descend. I found I never really needed them to ascend. However, today this climb was hard and I noticed many of my fellow climbers were using their poles. This was a nice “assist” and I used my poles throughout the rest of the climb. The porters were actively moving up the trail, and since the trail was both steep and narrow, we climbers really had to get out of the way. This added to the day’s activity and just made it more fun. I was able to meet up with Helen once again, and added to our twosome a third, Neils, from Germany. He was a young, tall, fit, 33 year old, hiking by himself, and he could really move. The three of us hiked tightly together for the last 1 ½ hours of today’s climb. It made the time pass more quickly and we were able to talk a bit. Today’s climb has many steep rock sections and some of them were “hairy” to get through, around and over. We ended up doing an overall elevation gain of over 3000 feet in four hours. I found out at Shira camp that I am no longer the old man of the climb. There is a guy named Mathew from the USA, who is age 63.

Once we made camp, David made lunch. This is memorable because it marks a turning point in my climb which I will explain below. Lunch consisted of fried chicken, French fries, one-half of a fried cheese sandwich and some incredible homemade soup. As much as everything was delicious, I found I just could not eat it all as the altitude tends to curb one’s appetite.

Shira Camp was located at an open mountaintop, so it was exposed and also very rocky. This was definitely different than Machame Camp, where we were nestled among trees and bushes. There was dust and dirt everywhere. My clothes were covered in dust, my finger nails were filthy, and I had dust up my nose. And, this was in spite of having hot water at camp with which to wash. The wind and hiking simply pushes the dust all around so every one of us was constantly dirty.

Today, I had a life first- I used a squatter toilet in the morning before we left Machame Camp. I just had to share that tidbit!!

Post lunch, around 3 PM, I got really sick. I got chills from fever, had severe stomach pains and developed diarrhea. I had to use the toilet many times and skipped dinner. My diarrhea persisted all through the night. This presented an interesting challenge. About 10 PM that night, having gone to the toilet several times since it had become dark, I decided continuing this approach made no sense. Consequently, I got a bucket from Hans and then proceeded to spend the remainder of the night crapping into the bucket inside my tent. Needless to say, I did not sleep well this night. Around 4AM, it was becoming obvious to me that if I could not hold water in my system I would soon dehydrate and that would likely end my climb. This was one of those moments where all of the realities of my situation became overwhelmingly clear, including the possibility that my climb may be over and I would have failed to achieve my goals. I felt truly alone as I contemplated my situation, but was honest enough to accept the fact I was not going to take a chance with my health. At 4AM, I began to drink sips of a half liter of water I



had with me. Happily, the liquid stayed in me and did not make my condition worse. By day light, at 6 AM, I was encouraged enough to decide to try the day's climb and see how I fared. I did not eat anything that morning at breakfast, or for that matter, at anytime during the day's climb. I was not going to take any chances.

Day 3

I made Mussa aware of my condition and he agreed with my approach of not eating. He estimated that today we would be climbing 7-8 hours up to 4,500 meters (15,000 feet), then back down to the next camp, called Barranco, at 3,950 meters. This day was the altitude adjustment day. The day went great. I had no further stomach issues and we covered the climb in five hours and forty-five minutes. We got to camp and the tent was set up right near the toilet. That was done at my request, "just in case". I ate plain rice for dinner and drank lots of hot water with sugar. I did not eat a lot, but this diet of rice, hot water and sugar was to become my staple for the rest of the trip. By the way, the temperature at camp was 20 or lower. As of Day 3, I had not experienced any altitude sickness issues.

Once the sun set, the air temperature plummeted. It got really cold at night and I found that even with a down fleece and jacket on, when I'd be sitting in the mess tent, or going to the toilet, after dark, I was quite cold. I did find that wearing a hat is a necessity. It is amazing how much heat you lose through your head and wearing a hat makes a huge difference in helping to try and keep you warm. So instead of being REALLY cold, I was just cold!

Day 4

When I awoke and went outside my tent, it was really really cold. We were in Barranco Camp, just below a sheer cliff called the Great Barranco Wall or Breakfast Wall. When we arrived at camp yesterday afternoon you could see the wall, which presents as a huge climb out of the canyon. Barranco Wall is an enormous cliff wall, with switch backs, enormous rocks and very steep inclines going up the side of a mountain. Its other name, the breakfast wall, is because many people lose their breakfast after trying to climb it. I could not use my poles here-I used my hands to climb in many spots. I found this part of the climb to be quite hard and with the huge drop off, I simply could not make any wrong steps. It was intense, and virtually no one is passing anyone else, including the porters. There was one spot where I had to take what I call a bit of a "leap of faith".

Another one of the more difficult spots to navigate on Barranco Wall is called the kissing rock. It has this name because the trail narrows so that you have to side step around this huge rock that juts out into the trail, with one arm on each side of the rock, such that your face is literally touching the face of the rock that is jutting out into the trail and you can "kiss the rock" as you carefully side step by. Okay, maybe some of my fellow climbers



were kissing the rock, but not me! Once I made it to the top of the wall, I was really happy and relieved. This was the single most “intense” part of the climb, so far. Once we had made it up the Barranco Wall, we spent another five and one-half hours climbing towards our next destination, the Barafu Camp. This camp would be the last camp below the summit. Barafu Camp was on a mountain top at 16,000 feet, with very uneven rocky terrain. Consequently, the tents were spread out over a large area, nestled in between rocks and boulders. It made the camp have a more ominous feel. I had another delicious meal which consisted of plain rice and plain pasta noodles. I did have David make me some sauce to put on the noodles, as I was now getting a bit more adventurous with my eating. Actually, I just needed to have something with some taste.

Day 5

Once I was done with dinner, I got in my tent and began staging my clothes for the summit climb. The summit climb was to begin at midnight, so my plan was to get up and dress around 11:30 PM. This meant I might get to lie down and sleep for a few hours, assuming I could sleep. But first, I needed to get everything prepared. I was advised to make my day pack as light as possible, because the summit ascent, from 16,000 feet to 19,500 would be incredibly hard. I found myself planning really carefully because all of this was new and because I was nervous. It occurred to me that all of the previous days climbs had put me and my fellow climbers right here, now on the cusp of what we came here for, to climb to the summit. It was a daunting reality and one that certainly limited the amount of sleep I would get. I did lie down and I think I slept for a couple of hours and then heard my name being called to wake me up and to get ready. It was 11:30 PM, August 23rd. Dressing in so much clothing, three layers on the bottom and five layers on the top, was a chore and, once I had it all on, I felt so constrained by having on so much clothing. On my face and head I had on the balaclava, a wool ski hat and opened up my jacket hood and used that, as well. On my hands, I had heavy cold weather gloves and inside those I placed hand warmers. Once I got outside my tent, I was still cold and wondered how I would be able to climb with so many clothes on. I found it difficult to grip my poles. Mussa, Hans, Jafari and I set out at 12:15 AM. Almost immediately, we were in a very steep rocky section, made up of those large boulders we all loved to climb over and around. I was right behind Mussa, trying to get used to seeing with a head lamp. I basically watched his feet and tried to step where he stepped. Every so often I would look up and see the head lamps of other climbers that were higher up on the mountain. Each time I did look up, it appeared that those lamps (and climbers) seemed to be so vertical to my position. It made what I had to climb, but could not see, appear to be steep beyond measure, almost impossibly so. That was depressing, so I put my head down and tried to empty my mind and just keep moving my feet and not to look up. But, each time I couldn't help myself and looked up, I was more overwhelmed by the sense of how hard this all was and what lay ahead to climb continued to remain so steep. I was tired from the lack of sleep and I was cold. Breathing was hard. I found myself constantly gasping for air. And drinking, well that went out the window almost immediately as the hose line from the Camelback bladder system froze 10 minutes after I



had left camp. As a result, I was reduced to one liter of water, in a thick plastic nalgene bottle, that thankfully did not freeze until much later on. So, I was sipping water, instead of drinking, and I was stopping to rest a lot. Unlike the other four days, this climb was simply exhausting and I stopped many times. At three hours into the climb, I felt like I was struggling to simply keep going. Mussa said I was doing fine; our pace was still good and he kept encouraging me. About this time, the assistant guide, Jarafi, took my day pack from me. He lightened my load and I was grateful. Getting rid of the 15 lbs or so I was carrying was helpful. One time, another hour or so later on, I stopped to rest and was leaning on my poles and I actually began to fall asleep. Mussa yelled at me to stay awake and, if he hadn't, I think I'd actually have fallen asleep while standing up.

Part way into this climb, it got windy. These were not gentle breezes, but heavy intense winds. They had enough force that when I would go to move my poles, the poles would be grabbed by the wind and I'd have to exert additional energy to place them down where they needed to go instead of where the wind was pulling them. I estimate that the wind chill made the temperatures -10 to -30 during this part of the climb. No wonder I was cold!!!!

Mussa began to really exhort me on. He began to tell me we were only forty-five minutes from Stella Point. He told me that was the end of the vertical portion of the climb and from there it would be another 45-60 minutes to make it to the summit on more rolling terrain. He began to count down the minutes to Stella Point, and all of a sudden I was there. I had made it to 5756 meters. There is a picture of me sitting at Stella Point, with my arms around Hans on one side of me and Jafari on the other. We were so cold, but it was exhilarating to have made it this far. We didn't rest long and set out to finish the climb and summit at Uhuru Peak. Before the sun comes up, dawn comes and the sky begins to lighten and now I could see the outline of the terrain and where we were headed. At 6:15 AM, the sun was visibly rising in the sky and Mussa took a set of incredibly beautiful pictures. I made it to the summit, Uhuru Peak, 5895 meter, about 19,500 feet at 6:31 AM. I was overwhelmed with the beauty of the summit and the surroundings, especially the miles of glaciers that ring one whole side of the summit. I was overwhelmed by having made it to the top and also felt a sense of relief that my fund raising efforts would be maximized.

Knock Foundation would be closer to moving forward with its plans to build a new orphanage and center. I felt gratitude toward my team, without whom I would have never been able to make this climb. And I felt thankful for the training I had done. After taking pictures at the sign that marks the summit, I sat down to pray. There was a prayer place and I had promised certain people I'd say prayers as they requested. This was so emotionally hard, combining the emotions of my climb and how tired I was with the sentiments, thoughts and feelings associated with the prayers. I cried as I prayed aloud and, at one point, took note that my guide Mussa was standing near enough to hear me pray and he was crying, too.



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I think we stayed up top for 20-30 minutes and then Mussa said, "let's get out of here." And so we set off to descend. What was interesting here is I got to see the terrain we had ascended up. What I quickly discovered once we passed Stella Point and began to really head down was that the mountain was so vast and that the terrain stretched in all directions for miles. What we had to go down was all scree, loose rocks, that had a give to them and which made it really easy to slip, slide and fall. We all tried to move our feet lightly and rapidly to take advantage and try to create the effect of skiing over the rocks by virtue of constantly sliding. That motion was exhausting in and of itself, let alone after seven hours of climbing. We descended down this massive scree mountain for about two hours until we were at the back side of the boulder and rock area that we needed to re-climb and pass through to get back around to camp.

I was back at camp and my tent. This was around 10:15 AM. Here I began to shed the extra layers of clothes I had on and was also re-packing my entire day pack and full pack because in two hours we'd break camp and start the major descent down. It was nice to change, lighten what I was wearing and reflect a little on the success of the day. Mussa and I set off at 12:45 PM to hike down to the second camp, which would be at 3,000 meters. That meant we were going to descend 6,000 feet in about four hours. The first two hours were relatively easy- nice terrain with a steady drop off. We passed the first camp and immediately went into what might be called a "lava flow". I describe this as an area kind of carved out and sunk about 7-15 feet below grade, about 10-15 feet wide, all filled with loads of rocks and boulders. This meant the next two hours of the descent were slow, over totally uneven terrain, and to add to the difficulty, it was alternating between heavy mist and light rain. That made all of the rocks slippery and the ground muddy and slippery. This whole section was made even harder because it was coming after 12 hours of climbing earlier today. These two hours seemed to go on forever, but then we arrived in the last camp. By now, it was raining steadily. There were hundreds of tents spread out on both sides of the trail that ran through the middle of the camp. The camp was the largest and most crowded and I learned that all of the various routes converge into this one last camp.

We found our tents quite a ways down the trail, almost at the end of the camp. This night, I slept the best, probably because I was really tired. But before heading off to bed, I did go with Mussa up to the Ranger station and met some of my new friends to have a celebration beer and learn a new card game, "shit head". I lost the card game and then gave way to other players, mostly guides and a few other hikers. We did all of this using head lamps, as the only light in the ranger station was by one kerosene lamp. This was fun and the mood was certainly joyous.

Day 6

I awoke the morning of the last day, excited to be "going home". After breakfast and packing up for the last time, David and my porters and a few others, gathered and danced and sang in celebration of a successful climb. I joined in with the singing (not the



dancing) and it was such a wonderful experience. The memory will stay with me always. Mussa and I headed out of camp around 8:30 AM. By this time, loads of climbers had already left. The trail down is the best of the trip. It is reasonably well maintained, very defined, and had lots of steps to it. In fact, hundreds and hundreds of steps all carved in the clay dirt of the rain forest, damp and slippery because of the night's rains. The ground was really slippery. Three hours down and there I was at base camp, greeted by Wendy and Kim. I signed the final log book, got my boots cleaned by a local boy, bought a great Mt. Kilimanjaro shirt with all of the trails and routes on the back and loaded into the van for what was only a 20 minute ride back to Kim's house. Wendy and Kim said I looked really gaunt, particularly my face. They also said, I stunk. I guess six days on the mountain, with no showers and just minimal means to try and keep myself clean, didn't cut it. I did send all of my mountain clothes, every bit of them, out to this most wonderful lady, who laundered them. I think that was a really good thing because no one else I know, including me, was going to clean them.

And so it was, mid day on day six, my climb came to an end. It was an amazing journey, unlike anything I had ever done. I went from never having camped to five nights in a tent. I had five weeks of mountain hiking preparation to prepare for five and a half days to hike and climb over fifty miles, most of it uphill, in a place 10,000 miles from home. I had a chance to meet some wonderful people and make friends that I hope will last a lifetime. And I got to raise money to continue our Foundation's efforts to try and make a small part of this world a better place and offer its residents a chance at a better life. I cannot imagine a more amazing adventure than this one and I will be forever grateful that in a moment of madness, at the exhorting of my daughter, I agreed to make this climb. I am better for it and my life richer for it. What more could I have ever hoped for?

For all of you, who have read my journal and shared this experience with me, thank you. For those of you who supported my climb with your financial generosity so that together we raised over \$60,000, I am honored and blessed by your love and support. Together we can change the world; all we have to do is try.