

Water for Sudan Trip & Production Journal February 2008

A lot can be learned from a man who as a boy walked across a thousand miles of desert, survived dehydration, extreme hunger, avoided being eaten by lions, and somehow ducked attacks by well equipped armies.

Monday February 18, 2008 — Prelude

POV–Rose Films was contracted by a Rochester based non–profit corporation, Water for Sudan, to make a fundraising and educational video for them. Water for Sudan drills wells in villages in semi–arid southern Sudan for people that have no access to clean drinking water. It is a young organization started by Salva Dut, one of the so–called “Lost Boys of Sudan” who settled as a refugee in Rochester in 1996. He became a US citizen in 2001, and has nearly completed his Bachelor’s degree in international business at SUNY Brockport.

I will leave at noon on Monday February 18th with 3 other travelers: Ben Dobbin, an AP reporter who has written a number of stories on Salva and Water for Sudan; Angelique Stevens, a professor at MCC who has been very involved in raising funds at MCC for Water for Sudan, and is creating an in–service course for MCC students to become involved; and Nancy Reinert, a pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, NY. Nancy is the member of the board of directors of Water for Sudan who got me involved. We will be joining our trip leader, Nancy Frank, also a member of the board of directors of Water for Sudan, who will precede us. She has been involved in church mission work in Africa for a number of years and has been to Sudan 3 times before. Once in Sudan, we will meet Salva and spend nearly a week with him at borehole sites, and in villages where he has previously drilled wells.

I have worked for months researching what production gear to take, especially given one specific restriction — 33 pounds per checked bag for the inter–country flights in Africa. I am told this is a strict regulation. This is a real limitation when traveling with video gear, especially since we each will carry our own tent, sleeping bag, water filtration bottle, and any comfort foods, as we will be camping in the bush and eating only rice and beans the entire time. The other issue is power — we will be hundreds of miles from electricity for nearly a week, and I have camera batteries to charge!

I feel compelled to bring what I call emergency cooling systems — backups of backups. I have a second video camera in case the first one fails, a second wireless mic, multiple ways of recharging the batteries, etc. I researched solar power for the chargers but found it impractical and costly. I was told Salva had a generator that I could use. Fortunately someone reminded me these portable generators often generate “dirty power” — power with such wide fluctuations in voltage that it can fry electronic devices. I am bringing a voltage regulator spec’ed for Africa’s 240 volts, 2 DC to AC converters for Salva’s Land Rover’s cigarette lighter, and 5 batteries that *should* last the entire shoot, should all else fail.

I budgeted the production with me as a one–person crew. This is a compromise that was necessary to make the project possible. A budget accommodating a sound person would have made it too costly, and it likely would not have been

done. Though it's not the ideal approach, I am confident in my ability to make it work. Fortunately Ben, Angelique and Nancy are helping carry the gear in their carry-on bags. It never would have worked otherwise. Nancy Reinert agreed to assist with some sound recording. We did a practice shoot together and she did well, intuitively collaborating and operating the microphone boom.

We will arrive at Entebbe airport, Kampala, Uganda roughly 8:50 PM (local time, about 25 hours after leaving). We have one day to adjust to an 8 hour later time zone, and we fly the following day.... the 21st.... into Juba, Sudan. We will stay in Juba one day and on the 22nd fly from Juba to Warap, the area of southern Sudan that Salva is drilling in. At that point we will be totally out of contact, in the bush, and visiting villages. Southern Sudan is roughly the size of Texas, and we will be hundreds of miles from Darfur, in an area currently at peace. The 21 year civil war between northern and southern Sudan ended with a peace treaty, excluding Darfur, signed in early 2006.

We hope to meet people and videotape village life in three distinct phases — before a well is drilled, during the drilling process, and a year or two after a well has been drilled, to see results like girls attending school instead of walking miles and miles all day to carry water. Salva is very firm on his requirement that every village participate in all phases of the process — including the decision on where the well will be located, the labor intensive installation of the well, its maintenance and management. Since this is Salva's 4th drilling season, it should be possible to see all phases.

There is one complication we are aware of, however — one of the trucks and the borehole drilling equipment have not arrived at the drill site from other locations, and some of the crew have been driving for days to get there. Only once they arrive can they begin drilling the well funded by First Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, NY.

The crew in transit are Mozee, also known as “The Grumpy Old Man,” and Ater. Mozee is Water for Sudan's primary driver, and a determined bulldog of a worker. Ater, another of Sudan's so-called “Lost Boys,” whom Salva met when they lived in Kakuma, the refugee camp in Kenya, left a well-paying job with Samsung Communications in Texas to join Salva and lead the second drilling team. He is training as they await new drilling equipment to arrive from around the world. Ater's team will double Water for Sudan's drilling capacity.

Tuesday February 19, 2008 — Arriving in Africa

We arrive safely in extremely friendly, flowering, tropical Kampala around 9PM local time, about 25 hours after departing. Nancy greets us at the airport while we enjoy the warm evening temperature of about 75 degrees, and the aroma of cooking fires burning wood and charcoal.

We check into the Namirembe Guesthouse and each get a private room with TV, fan, and bathroom. Some have hot water, others not. Some of the TV's work, others not. Some of the fans work, others not. Most of the time the power is on, sometimes not. Nancy says “Welcome to Africa!”

It is about 31 hours bed to bed from leaving home! Sleep is hard to come by, despite exhaustion from the multiple 8 hour flights, layovers and the Ambien I took. It might be adjusting to the new time zone, or perhaps it is simply the excitement and anticipation of the unknown to come...

Wednesday February 20 — Adjusting to being in Africa

I awake at 5 AM to the call to prayer from the mosque just down the hill from us. I want to put my earplugs in, but am concerned about oversleeping, and so begin repacking and reshuffling the gear to redistribute it to all five of our sets of bags — we have to downsize from the international limit of 50 pounds per bag to 33.

We have a luxurious buffet breakfast eaten outdoors under the flowers, overlooking Kampala. Following is an orientation meeting with the five of us about what is to come. Functioning is tough, given the jet lag, and the realization that repacking the gear is going to be a major event.

I spend the next half of the day sorting and re-sorting gear trying to figure how to get all I want to take to Sudan on tomorrow morning's flight that allows only one limited carry-on as well... and what must stay in Kampala. I think we'll be fine, given the help of my travel partners in distributing gear to their checked and carry-on bags.

We spend the second part of the day in downtown Kampala — interestingly, our driver's vehicle breaks a tie rod or steering linkage when doing a U-turn to get out of a diesel exhaust-choked traffic jam... "Welcome to Africa!" he says. But we are in a safe neighborhood, and another driver and car are there shortly. We spend some time shopping in a market with local and other African arts and crafts.

Kampala is in the 80's, and very comfortable, at about 4,000 feet in elevation. There is a lot of poverty to be seen, or at least what we might call working poor, but not so much as I saw when traveling in India. The outdoor billboards also give evidence of middle and upper classes by the amount of luxury goods advertised. One notable poster boasts cable TV with over 10 channels! Cell phones are everywhere. Infrastructure seems better than I expected. Kampala appears pretty healthy at a moment's glance.

We hope and pray for luck tomorrow in getting our paperwork completed in the immigration office in Juba, Sudan, as it can be a truly African experience, I am told. What we have one half day to do, and should by Western standards take ten minutes, has in the past taken two days... but regardless, we have one half day available. We need our entry document stamped with a seal and a signature that will allow us to get back OUT of Sudan next week...

Thursday February 21 — Traveling to Sudan

The extreme trepidation of trying to get our checked bags down to 33 pounds

for the flight to Juba was all for naught, as nearly all of us are over the limit, and they say nothing! We also have no trouble with the large carry-ons full of video and personal gear. We end up on a 20 seat turbo prop plane sitting behind an open-to-the-cabin cockpit. The pilot tells us he is not feeling so well, but that we should appreciate that, as otherwise he might do some dives and loops to give us a few G's! Great plane, nearly brand new, smooth flight. No issues with customs in Juba.

We're now at a tented "resort" on the White Nile, named, oddly enough, "The White Nile." Because the city is growing so fast hotel space is at a premium, and tented cabins are \$100 US per night, including meals, easily 5 to 10 times what we might pay for similar accommodations elsewhere.

We are put into "prefabs" since the tents are overbooked — these trailer-like units will be our last luxury for the week — we have a shower (cold), toilet and sink in each room, as well as AC. These accommodations would be considered a dump in most western countries, but we have quickly adjusted our standards and are grateful.

As in Uganda, people are extremely friendly. There's much less pollution here — actually there's much less of everything here — but lots of dust, a taste of things to come. It's much hotter, maybe 95 or so. I don't think we're nearer the equator, just lower in elevation, at about 1500 feet. Juba, the capital of southern Sudan, has one paved road we're told, but we haven't seen it yet. But we do see people using cell phones, texting, listening to MP3 players, and consuming American and British TV shows, along with Al Jazeera.

We gleefully return after a full afternoon in the immigration offices, whew! The experience was nip and tuck, but with a combination of mournful pleading and insistent prodding, we were able to get the passes stamped so we can be on our way tomorrow. This involved some interesting hoops to jump through — our letter of invitation is from last year, though it indicated the travel dates for this month, which makes perfect sense, to us anyway. The officials wanted a new letter, with a date from 2008. We had no way to generate a new letter, and so ended up copying the letterhead by itself at an outdoor photocopying service, handwriting new letters of invitation, and that almost seemed to do it. Then the officials told us at 4 pm to come back tomorrow, saying it was too late to finish, despite the offices closing at 5. They suggested we come back at 9, but that's when our plane leaves! They either failed to see the impossibility, or didn't care if we missed a plane. Additional pressure and pleading by our trip leader, Nancy Frank, finally did the trick.

This experience made Ben recall a Steinbeck quote that he paraphrased saying "All the while we thought we were planning Africa, when in reality, Africa is planning us." Nothing could be more true. The original text, from Travels with Charley, is "A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.... Tour masters, schedules, reservations, brass-bound and inevitable, dash themselves to wreckage on the personality of the trip. Only when this is recognized can the blown-in-the-glass bum relax and go along with it. Only then do the frustrations fall away." How

true this will prove to be...

The air conditioning in my room was turned on by someone while we were at immigration, or maybe the power just came back on, but in either case, it is welcome. But for now, I'm heading for a cold one at a seat overlooking the Nile.

And we're off to the villages tomorrow....off to the challenging part of the trip. I recall the caveats in Nancy's letter of invitation:

"I encourage you to think carefully about being a participant on this trip. This is not a trip for tourists. I have been persuaded to lead this trip for committed people who have deep interest in Sudan and Water for Sudan. I am willing because I know deep in my heart the value of experiencing firsthand what Water for Sudan and Salva are doing to change lives, borehole by borehole. Let me be candid: this is not a "wilderness journey" or adventure trip. This is for the future benefit of Water for Sudan.

It will be difficult. The trip will take us outside our comfort zones. On the site visits we will be camping very primitively in 110 degrees. If Salva cannot transport water or if we run out, we will need to filter our own. It is not a trip to take if you have diabetes or a serious medical condition requiring the possibility of nearby medical care, because there will be none available."

Friday February 22 — Into the Bush

The air conditioning stays on until past when I fall asleep, but the electric goes out sometime during the night. It stays cool though, and the camera battery charges fully. I wake up around 5 AM again, thinking of issues of control.... I want to capture my ideal shot list, I want space to pack my gear safely and cleanly in and have easy access to, I want things clean, organized, tidy... I know I am about to lose control but have no idea how much... I know I have to "let go and let God work...," as the saying goes, but have no idea how much...

From Juba, Sudan, we fly 500 or 600 more miles over the bush in a small charter plane to a dirt airstrip in Marial Luo used by Doctors Without Borders, the UN, and others. We are met by a group of village people and their goats on the airstrip. Salva arrives shortly thereafter and we have a joyous reunion as our bags are loaded *on top* of the Land Rover. This is my first clue things will be very different than I anticipated. The Land Rover is much smaller than I expected, and we cram like sardines into it. Our bags will never to be as clean again! As we drive off, Salva informs us that we are beginning a 6 hour drive down a hand-built dirt road to where Water for Sudan is about to begin the new borehole. Calling it a road is a very liberal use of the word. At best it is a single lane farm road; at worst it is like driving across the rows of a just-ploughed cornfield with ditches so deep one could easily flip a vehicle.

We stop along the road to see people getting drinking water from a hand dug well — they are lowering buckets 15 feet or so into a 3 foot wide round hole with mud and a small puddle of coffee-like water at the bottom. They likely walk hours for this water and are filling buckets for drinking, cooking, and

watering their animals. It is a sobering sight. One of the women there sees my video camera and wants to know if it is the kind that can see inside of a person, as there is something wrong with her breast...

Four hours into the drive we stop in the small village of Aliek where Water for Sudan drilled a borehole two years ago. There was little in the village before the well. Now there is a new school and the once-small market is thriving. The villagers volunteered their time to make the school out of bricks they make by hand. They pooled money for resources they could not make themselves, like chalkboards. Before the well, there were about 60 students. Now 556 students are enrolled learning math, science, social studies, religious studies, Arabic, and English. The teachers we speak with have an 8th grade education. They ask us to send help in the way of textbooks and teaching materials. The village is now building a medical clinic, again pooling their labor and making the bricks themselves.

“Kawadja!” — we hear this again and again — white people! Many of these people have not seen whites before, and we are quite a curious attraction. Some babies cry when seeing us. We learn to say “Cheebok” — “Hello!” We visit with people in the bustling market, and speak with teachers and students. Unfortunately school is on spring break, so we will not see classes in session. We fill up some jerry cans with fresh, sparklingly clean water hand pumped from the well, and get on our way.

We drive on to make camp at the borehole site. The road turns from dirt with two ruts to a walking trail, then to driving over the bush. Salva said proudly, “Look, we made our own road!” That basically means finding the path of least resistance through the bush, and driving on it repeatedly. The entire 6 hours we have been driving we have only seen 3 other motor vehicles.

We arrive at drilling site, in the village of Abilnyang. Village is an odd word to describe the area, as no two houses seem to be closer than a quarter mile from each other. But this will become a center once the well is complete.

We work quickly to put up our tents and get settled before the sun is down. I often camp in the wilderness with only what I can carry on my back, so by my standards, we are camping in style — we have chairs! And a cook! And we don’t have to wash our own dishes! This is very different than what I’m used to, doing all the work when camping. This is also very different in that I’ve always camped near water — streams or lakes. Here there is no water for miles, and no clean water for a dozen or more miles.

I view my suitcase and camera bags and in shock I begin to make my first major adjustment in letting go, and accepting that I am not in control of much at all — not the way I am used to approaching a video production. Almost nothing is as I had expected it — there is no clean place to store my gear. Dust is everywhere, and huge amounts of it. I quickly realize that I am not going to keep my gear clean, and the only thing I might manage to keep clean is the front of the lens.

I am about to organize the gear, break out the wireless mic, and do some

exposure tests when I am told “Jeff, come quickly with your camera!” That’s the way the next 4 days are likely to go — something happening all the time that I want to shoot. This time it is a singing and chanting greeting by local men welcoming us and the Water for Sudan crew to the drill site. It is a spirited and moving welcome.

Salva and I take a walk together, discuss the needs of production, how we’ll interview and translate together, etc. We decide to practice without the camera, and visit a neighbor that lives close to the drill site. She is home and we have lively conversation about her life without a well, and how it will be affected after the well is done. I should have brought the camera!

The neighbor told us that people are severely hampered by lack of clean water. Girls spend hours every day walking for water — often dirty, parasite-ridden water. They may walk 2 hours, fill up a gourd or jerry can, and return home, only to make one or two more trips that day. They do this every day in the dry season. If there was is a school, they could not attend, as the water is needed more. It is a very hard life. All this will begin to change once the well is here. There will be a school, and her daughter will attend. She will be able to make and sell alcohol in the market and earn money to buy seeds for more crops. There will be time to gather some of the plentiful fruits from trees in the area.

We arrive back at our camp as darkness settles, just in time for our first Rice and Beans dinner. Agum, Water for Sudan’s full time cook, prepares us a healthy meal of steaming food. I have not eaten much since early this morning and dig in heartily, knowing that the same fare may not be as appealing 5 days from now. After visiting for awhile I retire. My tent is very warm, as it was maybe 85 to 90 during the daytime, and is about 80 now. Despite the warmth, but I am comfortable on my Big Agnes sleeping mat, with the sheet borrowed from the White Nile tented resort.

Before falling asleep I clean the lens then review the day’s tape. I see many disturbing lens flares, so I plan on using the larger matt box for rest of shoot. I ease off towards sleep looking at the full moon through my tent door, and fall asleep easily despite the clinging heat.

Saturday February 23 — Our first full day at drill site

It gets down to 65 or so before dawn. I am comfortable, but wake up at 4 AM after maybe 5 hours and can sleep no more, despite the Ambien. I desperately want to sleep, as I am fighting a sore throat. But I have too much going on in my mind — how to configure gear, how to best wrangle the mics, etc. This remains a pattern for most of trip — getting about 5 hours sleep a night. But I run on adrenaline, and all is fine.

And so my new daily routine begins — eat a Power Bar for breakfast, wash face, apply sunscreen, brush teeth, apply insect repellent, and if lucky, poop.

While we are enjoying breakfast, Salva says, “I hear Mozee! He is coming!” We can hear nothing, but Salva heard the sound of the diesel truck rumbling in the

distance, likely the only mechanical sound for many dozens of miles. Sure enough, soon we can hear the truck as well, and then it turns into view, towing the drill rig behind. Great news! Now drilling may be able to begin today!

I am able to check the generator for charging camera batteries. It does *not* provide enough voltage to properly power the voltage regulator. I try the cigarette lighter in the Land Rover with DC to AC adaptor, and fortunately it works beautifully. Yahoo! No headaches metering out 5 camera batteries over the course of the shoot!

I reevaluate the environment and quickly realize that not only will it be very challenging to keep the larger matte box and filters clean, but likely the dust will ruin the precision operation of matte box. I do more tests without it and determine that what looked like lens flares in yesterday's footage were due to dust on the lens. Even though I had checked frequently and thought it was clean, it was not clean enough. I am able to shoot successfully without the larger matte box, without flares, with frequent attention to lens cleaning.

I only change tapes inside my tent to protect the tape drive in the camera. I also realize that I have way too much gear — some of it must go unused so that dust will not damage it. Other items have to go unused due to lack of people to help me use it — for example lighting control tools. I had planned on enlisting the help of others traveling with me, but I realize that we all have our own reasons for being here, each with our personal agendas, and that more than a few requests for production help will be an imposition and compromise other's experiences. It would also be too cumbersome, as I often need to move very quickly and only a very experienced crew person could be effective.

I put the wireless mic on Salva and a directional mic and windscreen on the camera and set off. Things are happening all the time that require documenting and I run around a lot.

We have Rice and Beans for lunch, which I supplement with the spicy herb mix Pat sent along, and a bag 'o' tuna.

The day reaches about 95 degrees. It is hotter with a more direct sun than yesterday, which was hazy. I am covered properly — sunscreen, lightweight long pants and sleeves, wide brimmed hat — but fail to make other adjustments. I don't realize the effect this will have, and move like I would anywhere else — quickly and frequently.

I am extremely thirsty and drink all the time, but never seem to quench a very deep thirst. I am not urinating much either. This concerns me a bit, as I tend to sweat a lot, and need to drink a lot when active. I wonder what the next 5 days will be like physically. I am making good use of my water bottle/filter — just fill it up with any water, and suck through the straw. It removes all bacteria and parasites. This gives me the freedom to drink larger quantities and leave the scarce bottled water for those who don't have a filter.

I am making other adjustments, putting my own comfort, or discomfort — as in hunger, thirst, and effects of the beating sun — out of my mind and focusing on

the production.

The borehole is a focal point for the whole community and we soon have another singing welcome — a group of 3 women we later called the “Women’s Auxiliary Association.” There are frequently groups of 5, 10, or 25 people at the drill site observing, helping, or visiting. People finally get used to me being there and stop staring at the camera lens.

I realize I must have gotten dehydrated traveling from Juba the day before. I drink constantly, about 5 liters by the end of the day, and never really quench my thirst. (I probably need more salt but am unaware of it.) The truly amazing thing is the local Dinka people, and Salva’s crew. They seem oblivious to heat and sun. They do not need to drink much, and work very hard in the heat of the day.

The drilling crew uses large water bags they call bladders to haul water from wherever they can get it to the drilling site to lubricate the drill and flush to the earth out as the drill bores deeper. These are like giant hot water bottles that hold maybe 500 to 1,000 gallons. Rats had chewed up one of the bladders since its last use and it has to be repaired. To me it seems like a major setback...but the crew is repairing it just like I would repair a flat on my bike...except it has a dozen or more holes, each hole about as big as a pancake. I have my doubts this will prove successful. The drill cannot run without the water the bladder supplies.

We have Rice and Beans with spicy mix for dinner, and I enjoy it very much. I worked up an appetite despite the heat. After dinner Salva announces we are out of water, and he’s going to get some. As it turns out, the Land Rover won’t start and needs a jump. While bringing the large Isuzu truck over to jump the Land Rover, the Isuzu gets stuck in the sand. This is how things seem to always go — two steps forward, one step backward. By the time Salva gets going it is nearly dark. It is a 4 hour drive, round trip, for clean well water. And oh, by the way, speaking of water, one of the patches on the bladder didn’t hold, and it sprung a leak and emptied... Moments later, the Land Rover returns. Flat tire! They end up taking the 5 ton Isuzu instead.

I realize how much we are in God’s hands as Salva drives off. We have no possible communication with him. There is no electricity within 300 miles, let alone cell phones. He is the only one of us, including his crew, with a satellite phone. If he has a breakdown going to or from the well 2 hours back up the road we could all be in very different situation. I’ve been praying for things like easy passage through airports, and for my sore throat to go away quickly. Now I realize how trivial those requests were.

We each have the luxury of what we refer to as a shower — more accurately it’s a standing sponge bath using only about 7 cups water. A sponge bath never felt so good! After relaxing and visiting a bit, I retire to my tent to review tape. I am generally pleased but can hear that camera-mounted mic is often not getting good sound due to wind noise, despite the windscreen...

Sunday February 24 — Our second day at drill site

I wake up 4:30, half hour later than yesterday. Adrenaline and production thoughts propel me off of the sleeping mat.

The early morning sounds are incredible. I have to get out and record the predawn and sunrise environment. Birds, insects, and who knows what all else, are making a symphony of new and intriguing sounds. I hook up the shotgun mic on boom pole and go out into the fresh air. This mic has an additional wind suppression element, commonly called a furry — a large fuzzy enclosure that is very effective in reducing wind noise. Unfortunately it is also effective in attracting insects, and the buzzing noises they make. I have to remove the furry from time to time.

During my morning Power Bar routine Salva announces that we are having a meeting in 10 minutes. I suspect the worst, and am anticipating he is going to let us know that we will not be able to videotape this well being drilled due to the combination of setbacks — the rat-eaten bladders, the drill not working properly and needing a good deal of attention, among other things, and that we have to change plans. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Salva wants everyone to gather together so we and the crew can all meet each other properly, which we did not take the time to do yesterday. He then says many encouraging words about our mission of bringing wells here and how dedicated his crew is. Then Mozee, the “grumpy old man,” says, “We are not going to be stopped by these or any other setbacks. We have been through much worse challenges before and succeeded. We are here to bring these people water, God is with us, and nothing will stop us.”

Sure enough, when I get to the drill site after the meeting, I see they have stemmed the leak in the bladder with a type of tourniquet, and the other patches are holding. The issues with the drill have been resolved, and now it is just a matter of time, we hope. The drilling begins!

I go with the crew on one of the frequent runs to fill the bladder with water, as a portion is constantly getting lost to seepage and evaporation during the drilling. Water to fill bladder comes from a nearby marsh that has not yet disappeared as the dry season ebbs on. It contains a few acres of open water that is brown like coffee. People are swimming, watering their livestock, washing, drinking, and filling water containers. They probably cannot understand why this merits the attention of me with my camera, but don't seem to mind.

When I return to camp we have a surprise lunch of Rice and Beans! Just as I am sitting down to eat someone says — “Jeff, you better see this, bring your camera.” I don't mind, I love it when things are constantly happening on documentary shoots. “The drill broke and they're making a part out of an old tire.” One of the rubber or plastic parts on the pump that forces the bladder water down the borehole had broken. They are fashioning a replacement part by cutting pieces from an old tire sidewall, and gluing them together. There is no reasonable alternative. An actual replacement part would take weeks, literally, to get here from Alabama. It might get to Kampala, Uganda, in a week

or two, but then it would have to be driven across many hundreds of miles of dirt road to get here — no charter flight like we used would be in that picture... The odometer is broken in the Land Rover, but we estimate the 6 hour drive netted us 50 or 60 miles on the ground. A drive to Kampala and back would take many days. And that doesn't factor in the possibility of the part getting stuck in customs for an unknown amount of time... So making a part out of whatever is on hand looks pretty darn smart. But my faith is not here. I think this might be a knockout blow.

Clean water, as we Kawadja visitors desire, is hard to come by — we have limited water for drinking, and only scant occasional water for washing. We live the experience, to a limited extent, of those we are looking to help. Ben and I plan to do some hand washing of laundry and have some water allocated for it and waiting in a pail. However, some goats wander in and drink it all up while we watch! We are too tired to shoo them off. We fall into the African bush experience of being dusty and dirty by default — we have no other option. I brought only 2 changes of clothes, due to weight restrictions and packing the video gear. I had planned on washing them frequently, as they are made for quick drying. But alas, this is not happening.

While we are watching the goats lap up our water, the near silence is broken by the sound of the drill. Their makeshift part has worked! Maybe we'll see this well come to life after all...

I concentrate on not running as fast or as often as yesterday, pacing myself, and staying out of midday sun whenever possible. My thirst has been quenched, finally, and I don't want to get dehydrated again.

I have never understood the British habit of having hot tea in the afternoon when living in tropical or equatorial environs, but I begin to get it here in Sudan. Ben suggests we have hot tea this afternoon, and I find it surprisingly relaxing and refreshing in a way that rejuvenates and helps me find renewed energy after the break. Thus begins our teatime routine!

There are incredible contributions by the local Dinka villagers. They help at every step of the way. For example, gravel is needed for the well building. There is none where we are. Women gather rocks from other places, carry 50 pound bags on their heads for 2 hour walks, and drop them at the borehole site. People, including the village chief and the appointed well-manager, then break the rocks into small pieces of gravel by hand, using metal tools the crew supplies. Others dig holes where needed, haul pipe, or clean parts. Whatever needs being done is done happily and voluntarily.

Sometime during the day the experience begins to sink in. I reflect on how easy nearly everything in my life is, and how hard being here is — not for me, but for the Dinka people and for the Water for Sudan crew. As easy as my life is, that's how hard their lives here are. As far as the pendulum has swung in one direction in America, it has swung equally far in the other direction here. Seeing how hard people work to survive, and how hard the villagers and crew work to put this well in, overcoming ridiculous barriers, is both humbling and inspirational. I feel like I should never whine or feel overcome by circumstances

again, and wish I had the will to make that happen. Along with this comes gratefulness for the privilege of being here to witness this event and learn these lessons.

As we gather for our dinner of — you guessed it — Rice and Beans! — Salva offers us the satellite phone for calls to home, and suggests we limit calls to one minute each. How incredible and weird it is to be hundreds of miles from electric, amongst people who are living a technologically very primitive lifestyle, and to be calling home via satellite to say hello. I reach Emma, as Pat's phone went to voicemail, and hurriedly tell her "Don't say anything, I just have one minute....we're all fine, the shoot is going well..." and I add a few short stories. I end up at a minute 23 seconds, despite my rapid motor-mouth.

There is no water for showers, so we go to sleep early. I drank 5 liters again today.

Monday February 25 — Our third day at drill site

I slept from 10:30 to 6 AM — new record!!! Others complained about a loud rooster, but I said, "What rooster?!?!?" Earplugs are the best!!! I'm feeling great — my sore throat is long gone, and head cold symptoms are very minor.

Today I hit my full stride as a one-man-band, or more accurately, a one-man-production-crew. I finally trimmed down gear to perfection for the situation — carrying one waist-pouch with spare batteries, tape, lens cleaning items, another waist-pouch with wireless receiver cabled to camera, with shotgun mic and windscreen clipped to waist-pouch, able to point in the direction of sound while I shoot, or be easily removed and handed to another person (if available) for better recording.

I feel totally adjusted to the environment now — I am resigned to the fact that gear will not be clean, I will not be clean, but I have all I need, and I am now comfortable in this minimalist stance. Today we pull out a thermometer — 123 degrees in the sun, 103 in the shade.

The drilling goes in fits and starts, as there are always problems, and they are always overcome. Salva and his crew have incredible perseverance and faith in their ability to overcome any obstacles.

It is a fairly easy day in that not a lot is happening. The drilling continues, and not much changes, so I can relax a bit. I decide to do my video journal entry about the production and find a quiet place where I can be alone and record without being self conscious. I frame up my shot, check sound and lighting, and am about to hit the record button when a man walks up the path and joins me — he sits down and I hit the button and record the video as a two-shot. I had not met him before, but I later find out his name is Deng Marial. He speaks no English, and I speak no Dinka. He makes an interesting side kick to my delivery, and often steals the show with his fascination with the camera and seeing his image on the small viewfinder that is turned toward us!

I wander around and record scenes of everyday life — boys herding goats, women with babies, people at their homes. In the local Dinka language, the houses are called something that we would phonetically spell “hut,” oddly, as that is the English word we use to describe the structures. They are round, made of hardpacked earth over a wood frame, with a type of straw roof. People live by raising cattle, goats, sheep, and by growing foodstuffs such as sorghum. Before the civil war, it was a good life, though always challenging in the dry season. The decades of war took a huge toll on nearly every village and family. I see very little in the way of modern influence other than western clothing, plastic bowls, buckets, and jerry cans. There are metal tools such as axes, machetes, and spears. These are likely traded with craftsmen in larger towns in southern Sudan. All agriculture is done by hand, with no use of machines or animals for plowing. I see no use of wheels, other than bicycles.

There are often severe health compromises due to lack medical care. One boy lost his arm after a Cobra snake bite because the nearest medical clinic is a three day walk away. (In Marial Luo where we landed there is a Doctors Without Borders clinic. Our six hour drive is a three day walk.) When he arrived, they had to amputate his arm to save him. It is hard to imagine how a people can survive in a place so barren, in the dry season, and so challenging. Yet the Dinka seem to not only survive, but appear happy. They are very caring people who are willing to give what little they have to people in need.

Dinka people are not unaware of the modern world, and the ones I met do not shun it. They have seen the modern world in the terrors of war machines. They have seen modern world in the wonders of medicine and clinics that they may have walked to visit. They have seen the modern world in the planes that occasionally land near the clinic with food, medicine, or other supplies. They have seen the modern world in the well drilling equipment that hums in the background.

The Dinka I talked with are eager to embrace the future. When we spoke with parents, they want their children to be educated. One girl said she wants to become a pilot, so she can fly in supplies to help people. Another girl said she wants to become a doctor.

Once a well has been drilled in a village, often a school follows, built by the community without outside assistance. Following that, marketplaces begin and blossom. For the fortunate villages, this development attracts outside assistance, and an NGO may staff and supply a medical clinic. (NGO is Non Governmental Organization, typically large non-profits like the International Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and CARE.)

Hanging out at our campsite and visiting with villagers, we hear many stories about how people’s lives will change after the well, and some of their hopes and dreams. We also learn that 5 goats were killed nearby by a leopard.

The crew did not stop drilling until 10:30 or so at night, just as I went to bed.

Tuesday February 26 — Our final full day at drill site

I wake up just in time to record some of the villagers that are camped near the borehole finish cooking and eating one of the goats that the leopard killed. I return to camp for my now-ritual Power Bar breakfast routine.

The sun isn't up too high when we hear the crew has hit water! Now the drill is removed and pipe begins to be inserted all 260 feet down. News spreads, and soon another "Women's Auxiliary" group comes to sing and dance in celebration.

The men are not about to be left out, and hold a ceremony of their own — a wine drinking ceremony. We are invited to attend and discuss the new well and school with them before they drink. The wine looks more like day old fermenting mud-like beer to me, but they love it. I opt not to try it, knowing I can ill afford to get sick... Hopefully I have not insulted anyone.

Salva's crew works to blow out the well — they use highly compressed air to shoot out all of the muddy water created in the drilling process until only clear water blasts out of the pipe. Once that's done we leave to meet Salva's dad. The crew will finish the process. There won't be much to shoot now at the borehole. Actually, the best scene *will* take place here, but it will be tomorrow or later, after we are gone. The pump will be installed, the villagers will get their first drink of fresh water, and they'll celebrate. I had really hoped to shoot this scene, but with all the setbacks, I am pleased to have gotten the footage I have.

Salva's dad, Mawien Dut-Ariik, lives about an hour and a half from the drill site, in the village Salva was born in, Lou-Ariik. He was the inspiration for Water for Sudan, and that is one reason we are eager to meet him. When Salva first learned his dad was alive, after 19 years of not knowing, he left Rochester to visit him at a hospital in Sudan where he was being treated. Salva learned that Mawien nearly died of a parasite that he had gotten by drinking unclean water, and Salva immediately knew how he wanted to give back to his country — by bringing clean water to his people. And so began the spark of an idea that today is Water for Sudan.

While looking for Mawien, we see the hut Salva grew up in, and the village that is now thriving, thanks in part to one of the first wells Salva drilled 3 years ago. We drive into the village to locate Mawien. As we drive, kids run alongside the Land Rover yelling "Kawadja! Kawadja!" We park and go into the village to search for Salva's dad.

After we find his dad, I get separated, wandering in street, and am soon in the center of a crowd 10 to 15 people deep all around me. It's a bit odd being the center of that much attention. I get rescued by a cousin of Salva's, and we drive with Mawien to the Water for Sudan storage compound and visit for awhile. It is a privilege to meet him, and he and our Water for Sudan team from the US express mutual pride about Salva's accomplishments. Mawien, a Dinka cattle herdsman when Salva was a boy, is pleased to meet some of Salva's US supporters, but also embarrassed that he cannot offer a more proper setting —

in this impromptu meeting there is nowhere to sit, and no refreshment. We take it in stride, and hopefully ease his discomfort about it. After we visit some, Salva and his dad, who see each other more regularly now, have some private time and we play Frisbee with a group of kids.

We set off well before dark, not wanting to drive in the dark if we can avoid it. The road is so much easier to see in daylight. Shortly after leaving, the Land Rover begins overheating...a new one for us. Oddly enough, when we stop to fill it with water, it hardly needs any. Next, the Land Rover won't start and we have to push it and pop the clutch! We drive another 15 minutes or so before Salva again stops to let it cool. I urge, "Make sure you stop on a flat place that doesn't have deep ruts so we can push it!" The only consolation is that Mozee is driving somewhere behind us and can help if we need it. Mozee does catch up at one point, takes a look at the Land Rover and informs us the radiator needs to be cleaned off — dust is preventing it from cooling the engine, but that will have to be done once we get it back to camp.

We go through the stopping and cooling routine several times, and it is now getting dark. We lose sight of Mozee in the truck, who has stopped in a village behind us. As we drive along, it seems as if the road is less clear. Then it seems the road is simply not there. We have lost the road! We literally lost the road — we find ourselves driving around in the bush over things that look and feel like trees going under the Land Rover... we are lost in the bush, in the dark.

Mozee is still behind us, somewhere, but we do not see him. Salva is driving forward, searching for the road. The rest of us are urging him to turn back, as the bush is getting rougher, and we're sure we will either get stuck, or find ourselves minus a rear axle. We park and are sitting having some (slightly heated at this point) discussion about which way to go. Nancy says defiantly "I am NOT spending the night in this Land Rover!" while pointing a flashlight out the window looking for the road. But we cannot agree on how to find the road.

Then the glow appears. When there are almost no artificial lights for hundreds of miles, the glow of coming headlights radiates throughout the sky. Mozee's glow approaches from probably a half mile away. I yell, "Somebody give me a flashlight fast!" and bolt out of the truck. If Mozee is passing on the road, I want to make sure he does not pass us by. Running into the bush toward his light, I can't figure which way he is going — first it seems one way, then the other. I chase back and forth through the bush wildly waving my flashlight toward the glow. Back and forth I run, left and right as the headlights bounce this way and that. I have no thought of any danger other than being stuck there for the night — I have forgotten snakes, scorpions, hyenas, and leopards, but fortunately have long pants and hiking boots on. They'll protect me from the burrs anyway!

Finally Mozee's path and mine intersect and he sees me. Unfortunately, it turns out he has lost the road as well! Mozee and Salva discuss the options, and decide to drive back to a flat area that is a mostly dry marsh — a place we thought we might sink into — and search from there. Under heavy protest, Salva drives back into the flat marsh.

We don't sink, and finally we find the road again. Amazingly, Salva never lost confidence OR sense of humor about the situation. We Kawadja's crammed in the dusty Land Rover had lost both for awhile. We did NOT want to spend the night in the vehicle with leopards and hyenas roaming around... as we feared we might...

A surprise dinner awaits us at camp — not Rice and Beans, but goat that has been given to us. It is excellent. The goat was not the first gift of food. Every day we have been here a villager stopped by and gave us a gift of eggs or a chicken to slaughter and cook. These are enormously generous acts, as the animals are so valuable to these people who have so little. But that seems to be the way of the world — the folks that have the least are often the ones that give most freely to others.

Sleep comes easily tonight.

Wednesday February 27 —Salva drives us to catch plane at Marial Luo

We get up early, break camp, repack, and are out by 7:50, saying goodbyes to the crew. Eagerly looking forward to cold Nile Specials on the banks of the White Nile, we're so ready to get back to what now seems like the extreme luxury of the prefabs in Juba.

We begin the 6 hour drive down the dirt road in plenty of time to meet our charter flight at the dirt airstrip. We also allowed time for a stop at Aliek, the village along the way with the well, the market and school, to do some more shooting and interviews. I get very lucky with this shoot — unlike the first visit there, I get great shots without anyone staring at the camera. I am able to shoot the market, and hand brick making for the new medical clinic.

We quickly get on our way, being on a schedule to catch our flight, but drive only about an hour more when Salva stops and says "Flat tire!" We think, ok, no big surprise, not so bad, it's around 10 AM, we've built in extra time for our drive to the plane at 2:30... Then Adenon, the second driver with us, says the spare is also flat. We know we are in trouble...

We quickly make a plan — Ben, the AP reporter who is also a runner, volunteers to walk with Adenon back the 11 to 15 miles to the last village where they hope to meet Mozee. Fortunately, Mozee is supposed to be driving through that village sometime later today. (but not past us... we had made a turn that he will not need to make, as we're going to different locations.)

We reschedule our charter flight thanks to Salva's satellite phone. During this process some of us are beginning to get a bit stressed and ask Salva about what options might be available, what the potential eventualities are, and how we might get out of this situation. Salva is remarkably unflappable, and faithful. His response is, "Let us see what God has in mind for us. Let us see what God will do. We will be fine." What a life lesson in faith. A lot can be learned from a man who does business under these conditions half of the year. A lot can be learned from a man who as a boy walked across a thousand miles of desert,

survived dehydration, extreme hunger, avoided being eaten by lions, and somehow ducked attacks by well equipped armies.

After about one hour, around 11 AM, Salva decides to follow Ben and Adenon and leaves. So that leaves four of us with nowhere to go, and with no one to translate. Not many people pass, it is pretty remote. There may have been someone every half hour. Those that do pass by make sure we are okay. We can tell they want to make sure we have water and food, despite the inability to speak with each other. We do have some food, and enough water for the rest of the day anyway.

We make ourselves comfortable laying on sheets, reading, journaling, relaxing. Finally, Salva, Ben and Adenon return in the Isuzu with Mozee...Yeah!!!! They had been very fortunate and not missed him. They caught up with Mozee in Aliék as hoped. Mozee was cooking by the side of his truck. Ben and Adenon bought a bunch of Cokes in the market, and rode back with Mozee, picking up Salva on the way. So Mozee removes the wheel, takes the two flats, and is off to Aliék to make the repair. We think he might be back in 4 hours...

Hours pass. Many hours... Only one vehicle passes... a Guinea Worm Relief vehicle. There is an African driver and 2 Kawadja in it. We speak with them a scant few minutes, as they are eager to be on their way as soon as they learn we are okay. The only white folks we've seen in a week, besides ourselves, and also the first people we've seen in a week that are in a hurry...go figure!

We spend hours there in the bush waiting in the shade. There is an ideal shade tree just past the Land Rover. It is huge and provides excellent cover. Salva tells us it is a gum tree, and demonstrates how to get sap out of it. He used to make chewing gum from this type of sap when he was a small boy.

We realize the chances are increasing that we will be here in the dark, and though we are not willing to discuss it aloud, we are beginning to wonder about spending the night here. We gather wood, build a fire, and heat some water in Angelique's cook kit for our now-ritual afternoon tea. We spread out some more sheets and settle deeper.

Eventually one woman that has been by a few times brings us a chicken and insists we keep it. It is very kind of her, especially knowing that the chicken is likely very valuable to her. We insist she take some shillings for it, and she agrees despite her intent of making a gift. We proceed to slaughter and cook the chicken on our fire. Well, to be clear, Ben, who claims some childhood experience in such affairs, slaughters the chicken while the rest of us either look away, or in my case, photograph. We crudely cook the chicken on our fire, sufficiently charring it to ensure food safety. It turns out a bit tough in parts, but tasty, and hits the spot in a way I never would have guessed!

We have no idea where Mozee is, or when he will be back. We are running all kinds of contingency plans... Mozee does not have a satellite phone, so there is no communication between us... only prayers and faith.

We settle in and enjoy star gazing a beautiful sky, as we ponder spending the

night, all of us walking many miles for water tomorrow, and rescheduling international flights. But we have gotten used to the idea that we are not in control, and may as well relax. The idea of a night under the stars is becoming more comfortable.

Finally, about 8 hours after he left, just after we finish our chicken dinner, those headlights cut a hole in the sky again, and Mozee shows up out of the blackness. We had spent a total of 12 hours there in the bush. We might have spent days... Turns out Mozee was not able to fix the tire in the last village, (where there are no services by the way, he just happened to have more tools there) and had to go all the way back to the drill site to get other tools — imagine changing the tire on a 4x4 vehicle rim with no power tools...

The rest of the drive to the airstrip is uneventful, just long in the middle of the night. We get there around 2:30 in the morning and spend the night crammed inside the dusty Land Rover, as none of us is willing to liberate our bags from the roof and put tents up. Though disappointed we will be not getting our showers and Nile specials that evening, we are grateful that we are there at all, and hope to make our flight from Juba to Kampala the next day. Somewhere during the middle of the night Angelique can no longer take it inside the Land Rover, and climbs up top, drags her sleeping bag out of her pack, and sleeps on the remaining roof-space that is not covered with bags. She and Ben are up early, and venture into the market for Cokes and cookies before the plane arrives.

The rest of us manage to detangle from our crunched positions just in time to drag our bags to the plane, which comes at 7:30 as planned. We make our connection in Juba, and after taking off from Juba, we have a quick stop in Yea, another small dirt airstrip in Sudan before the flight continues on to Kampala. I get off the plane to stretch, as does Angelique. I say to her, "What's that smell? It's like some spice or herb!" Angelique said dryly, "Jeff, it's clean people. People who take showers. That's what they smell like."

We soon are back in Kampala. A shower never felt so good even though this one is cold! I do about 2 hours of intensive hand laundering of every piece of clothing I had taken. I am lucky to have a room with cross ventilation and a fan, so it all will dry. We go out into a very modern and international Kampala and enjoy one of the best Indian dinners I have ever eaten, including those in India! And many Nile Specials, of course.

So much was new, so much was demanding or consuming in one way or another, that the 6 days without running water, electric, phones, email, planes or electric lines overhead, left few times for thoughts of anything other than the here and now. Over the days I felt myself relaxing in a way, being in the moment in a way I typically fail to be in my often rushed, modern life with all its so-called conveniences and labor-saving devices. I also felt kinder, less self centered, and more like the Jeff I used to know and love. I hope to be able to maintain that when I so easily slip back into my life at home.

I also hope to more deeply process some of my experiences. Where do I go from here? How do I make sense of what I have now experienced first hand? It's

one thing to know that millions of people live on less than a dollar a day, it's another thing to begin to know some of them. The long range affect on me is hard to predict, but I feel like changes are beginning to happen.

February 29

Ben, Angelique, and Nancy F. are off to the States, and Nancy R. and I are off to Tanzania for our 9 day safari in Tanzania's national parks. We will visit Arusha and Lake Manyara National Parks, Ngorongoro Crater, Olduvai Gorge and Serengeti National Park, some of the best wildlife viewing areas in Africa. We will be camping in the bush — just the four of us — Nancy, me, our driver-guide, and the camp cook — an old fashioned Hemingway style safari, sans the guns.

But that's another story for another day!

Closing Note:

I ask Salva how he continues to find motivation and energy to work as hard as he does fighting all the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that are inherent in this work. He quickly and easily tells me, "Jeff, I am planting the seed, the seed of water. It is up to these people to take it from there. They will send their children to school, and who knows what happens. Maybe one of these children will be lucky and go from this school to a larger one in another town, and then on from there. You never know who will be the next person to change the world, or where they will come from. This is what keeps me going."

To learn more, or contribute:

<http://waterforsudan.org/>

An excellent resource on The Lost Boys and their experiences:

<http://www.godgrewtiredofus.com/>

An excellent book written by 3 Lost Boys:

[They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan](#) by Benjamin Ajak, Benson Deng, Alephonsian Deng, and Judy Bernstein