

DATELINE:

Report from Shira Camp 2, 3815m ASL, Mt Kilimanjaro

7am Tuesday August 3, 2010

Day 4, Kili Climb 2010

Report by Paul Francis, Humpty's Founder and Executive Chairman



Earlier this year at Humpty's annual Good Egg lunch we introduced you to the inspirational Amelia Hillary – the granddaughter of Sir Edmund Hillary – who is leading our second annual Kili Club climb up Mt Kilimanjaro with her father, Peter.

You might remember that Amelia, who had recently returned from a successful summit of Africa's highest peak, actually threatened to climb Mt Kilimanjaro in her high heels to help raise money for the foundation.

Well, I can report that after three days of climbing, no one has caught sight of any Jimmy Choos or Manolos (hey, I'm married and have three daughters – I have to know my shoes). As Michele Rosengren from Adventure1000 just told me with a laugh, "no high heels, she seems to have kept those tucked away".

It made me laugh and reminded me of the great sense of humour that develops on Kili, not to mention the awe-inspiring *esprit de corps* between the climbers.

The chairman of Humpty's medical committee, Dr Martin Kluckow is Humpty's man on the mountain this year and says rapport between climbers has been one of the highlights of the trip so far. "We don't have a camp fire – it's a national park – but every night inside the mess tent our great group gets together and banter. We've all blended really well."

Yesterday the team had what Michele called a "relatively easy day" of climbing – about four hours – but it prepped them for what's ahead today. I also think the chicken and chips for lunch plus a delicious bowl of spaghetti Bolognese last night helped as well as the hot cup of tea in bed this morning. As you are reading this, the climbers will be facing one of their biggest challenges – roughly eight hours of high altitude climbing in readiness for their final assault on the summit later in the week. "We are heading to the Barranco camp via the Lava Tower following the 'climb high, sleep low' technique," Michele said.

Bottom line, that technique is one of the safest ways to climb and it's what we did last year. Basically, you climb high to Barranco to get used to the thinner air at that altitude and then come back down and overnight at Lava Tower where it is easier to breathe. The height difference mightn't seem like a lot – a mere 600 m or so - but it's all relative and, trust me, once you're beyond 2000m, I reckon it's all hard going, so much so that I've dubbed it Tough Tuesday.

Despite the challenges, Peter Campbell, from Gladesville, says climbing Kilimanjaro is the best thing he's ever done. Peter first saw Kili when he was visiting St Jude's, the wonderful school run by a really terrific Aussie, Gemma Rice. Humpty's Good Eggs were privileged enough to visit St Jude's at the end of our inaugural Kili Climb last year and those beautiful children welcomed the 2010 team to the mountain with a sing-along over the weekend. Peter remembers being instantly mesmerised by the kids just as he was when he first caught sight of that imposing peak.

"I found myself imagining the view from its summit and wondering whether it would be possible to see the curvature of the earth from such a height," he said. I know what he means. After meeting Peter last year and talking about Humpty's first assault, he was determined to make the summit. "So far, it's been an unbelievable experience and I can't believe I am actually doing it," he said from the mountain.



Evan Smith is another man of the mountain this year. He was inspired by Gary Gerstle from Man Investments, who climbed last year with his wife, Penny (one of only two women who made the trek, Paralympian Kelly Cartwright being the other). "It's hard to think that in a country as prosperous as ours the life and wellbeing of a child can come down whether or not medical equipment is available at their location," said Evan, who lives in Newtown. But now – with only a few more days to go before he embarks on his push to the summit, Evan is bursting with enthusiasm. "Bring on the next mountain," he told me from half way up the hill.

Okay, okay, I'm kidding – Kili is hardly a hill but the way the Adventure1000 team has been preparing the Kili Club, you could be forgiven for thinking it is. Martin Kluckow reckons that's why everyone has been so relaxed with the climb so far. Sure, there's a few altitude headaches and bouts of nausea – typical for mountain climbing – but everyone is moving forward (apologies to Julia Gillard).

"We are on the approach to Kili and it's all been about the preparation; it's like preparing for the delivery of a pre-term baby," Martin said. "We have got everything in place, Michele and Brian have everything planned, and the conditions are perfect for the final delivery in a couple of day's time.

"The peak looks very steep, a whole lot steeper than what we have done so far and I'm glad we have taken the right steps and done the right preparation because we've all acclimatised."

At the moment, the Kili summit is towering 2km over the Humpty climbers and they have broken through the cloud line, which means they have a picture-perfect, cloudless blue sky over them (because the clouds are actually below them). It is a breathtaking sight and makes me yearn to be back on the mountain. You fall in love with nature on that peak in a way you never thought possible.

Anastasia Papadopoulos – aka Tess – echoed my sentiments exactly just now: "I just don't want this to end." Thirty-seven year old Tess, who hails from Cronulla, is a relative new comer to Humpty's growing family of good eggs, having only joined us last year. But since then, she's been determined to make a difference and she has certainly put her money where her mouth is, not to mention her great big heart.

I can't thank the 2010 Kili Club enough: their efforts are awesome, their courage inspiring, and their generosity uplifting. If you can help out their fund-raising efforts, we'd appreciate it. You'll be doing a little bit to help make the lives of a lot of sick and injured kids a whole lot better.

A final message from Martin Kluckow: "Paul, can you let everyone at Royal North Shore Hospital and Humpty know that the whole group is going really well."

Mate, I will. And here's a message for our 19 Kili Clubbers: You make us all very, very proud.

To follow the trek day by day or to donate to the trekkers' fundraising, go to Humptysmountain.com.au