

2002 World Lecture Tour – The Diary! – Tim Ellis

JANUARY 3 - Los Angeles: Arriving at LA International Airport we whizzed through customs, but then hit the queues!!! The line to check in baggage at the American Airlines counter was massive! We waited in it for about 30 minutes, as advised by an AA staff member, but when Sue-Anne asked the staff member again whether we were in the right line, she said we didn't need to wait there as we had no baggage... So we moved in to the next line... The 40 minute long line to pass through security and get into the gate.

Since September 11, airport security in the USA has become much more visible, though it's effectiveness is still debatable. The visible presence of soldiers with automatic weapons in the airport, and the constant searching of our check-in and carry-on baggage... Did we feel safer, or more at risk? We're still not sure... Also, USA flags, patriotic signs and logos, and "God Bless America" messages are everywhere! One American told us it's got to the stage that, if you don't have a flag on your car and your house. Then, "What's wrong with you?!"

Our first stop was New Orleans... Where our luggage had already arrived (they seem happy to fly bags unaccompanied. Maybe they have a bit more yet to learn about security!) Gary Hughes arrived at the airport to pick us up and then we started to experience some of the Great American Hospitality. He took us to the beautiful house he shares with his wife Fay, their black cat Charlie, and their cockatoo Ginger. The house was gorgeous, with a library filled with hundreds of magic books, a play room full of old pinball, video and poker machines, a magic bar upstairs, display cabinets filled with magical curios, magic posters and signed 8x10's were everywhere, and the house was filled with all the latest high tech gadgetry. Not only that, but Gary and Fay had a little self-contained "apartment" in their back yard prepared especially for us! They even took us out to a local eatery where we got to experience some great Louisiana taste sensations. Lots of fried food, but delicious!!!

JANUARY 4 - New Orleans: The first lecture had about 50 people in attendance and, although we'd checked that they had a sound system for our music, we couldn't patch into it. Tim did the razorblades to a CD from Gary's car... But luckily we had a cassette of the 6 Card Rap with us so we could give them at least a little sample of "our kind of music". Regardless of this glitch, they loved the lecture, many saying it was the best they'd seen, and they bought quite a lot of notes. Jon Racherbaumer was Tim's "volunteer" for the card section of the lecture, and Tim found it quite hard to concentrate every time he asked Jon to shuffle the cards and Jon gave a gravity-defying demonstration of dazzling skill.

JANUARY 5 - New Orleans: Gary kindly took Tim off to Circuit City to buy some powered speakers to provide music for the rest of the tour. Then it was back to Gary's house where Tim and Sue-Anne conducted a two hour plus workshop for 5 enthusiastic students. They covered Runaround Sue, Soda Resurrection, Card to Wallet, Coins Across, and even the Linking Rings.

Later that evening, everyone headed off to the Rivertown Theatre for the local SAM (Society of American Magician's) annual banquet, where they present awards and "install" the club's new officials. Tim and Sue-Anne had an absolute ball, premiering their "Crocodile Hunter" parody, and getting a standing ovation for their 40 minute set later in the show.

After the show, Gary and Fay said we couldn't leave New Orleans without seeing Bourbon St so, even though it was past midnight, we got into their car and headed downtown. The city itself is filled with gorgeous architecture, lots of French influences and intricate iron lattice-work. But contrasting with this beauty is the decadent hedonism of the bars, strip clubs, and voodoo shops littering Bourbon Street. Fay commented that it had gotten even worse since she'd been there last and, even though it was fascinating to watch the anarchic behaviour of drunk college kids, we couldn't get off Bourbon Street soon enough. We did sit down at the famous Cafe du Monde and enjoy coffee and the local style of donut. A bit like a churro, smothered in icing sugar, and addictively tasty. Even though we'd just eaten "dessert", Gary insisted we sample crawfish. These were like yabbies, but cooked in a tingling combination of spices that even tempted Tim, who managed to eat 3, while Sue-Anne, more adept at "cracking tails and sucking heads" had about 5. (Gary loves them and must have devoured 40!)

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JANUARY 6 - New Orleans: Gary took Tim to the airport the next day to pick up their rental car. (After waiting 20 minutes in a line, Tim was told he didn't need to as his car was sitting outside with his name on it. "Just get in and drive away.") Gary patiently waited for Tim while he got the car, and this was typical of his extraordinary hospitality. He gave us long distance pre-paid phone cards which we later used to keep in touch with Danny Archer, our tour co-ordinator, and Gary gave us access to our email through his computer. We had a wonderful time and they really made the start of our massive tour a pain-free experience.

After a 90 minute drive to Baton Rouge we checked into the Hampton Inn presented our lecture in the home of Steve Zuckerman.

JANUARY 7 - San Antonio: After the eight and a half hour drive to San Antonio, Texas, we were met by Don Moravits and his wife Danine. Don is associate pastor of the small (6-12) congregation of the Abiding Word Temple. They took us out for dinner to a Texas "cafeteria" where Tim had fried steak (!) and Sue-Anne enjoyed chicken and dumplings. Then it was off to the small venue where they normally hold their church services. Don was impressed by the turn up off of 30, with some driving in from as far away as Austin (90 minutes away). Afterwards, Tim, Sue-Anne and Danine stood in the parking lot behind the rented Ford Ranger pick up truck and Don prayed for safety and success for the rest of the tour.

JANUARY 8 - Dallas: Next day it was a five hour drive from San Antonio to Dallas. The Dallas lecture was the best so far. A record attendance for them (about 50-60) squeezed into the private room of the Golden Corral restaurant and they really enjoyed the presentation. Once again, people were very generous with their compliments saying it was the best lecture they'd ever seen. One of the most popular tricks here seemed to be the razorblades, with a group of people staying back chatting with Tim afterwards and really examining those blades.

JANUARY 9 - Reno: Next morning we were up at 5am in order to get to the Dallas Fort Worth airport in plenty of time to return the rental car and get through all those long lines. Well, the rental car return was painless, there were no lines at baggage check in, but then they "randomly" chose us to have our checked-in bags x-rayed. The roadcase went through fine, but the cardboard poster tubes caused great concern with one case being x-rayed and searched 4 or 5 times! Then they discovered a pack of batteries and wanted to see them, then the CD-Roms.... after 30 minutes, our bags were finally considered worthy of flying on American Airlines.

Next, the personal x-ray machine. Again, no line, just straight through! Yay! But we celebrated too soon. We were both "randomly" chosen as we boarded, to have our carry-on bags (and our persons) searched before we could get on to the plane. Another non-American couple in front of us were also "randomly" chosen (they said they got "randomly" chosen a lot) and so we were all treated like criminals and physically searched and felt up in quite a humiliating way. "You don't have to be searched" explained the helpful American Airlines supervisor, "you could choose not to fly instead." If we didn't like the "random" searching policy she told us we could write to our congressman. She didn't know who the congressman for Australia was though.

Finally we got to Reno and it wasn't long before we spotted fellow Australian Mark Mayer in the baggage collection area. He'd just arrived in Reno via a quick stopover at the Magic Castle the night before. It was `Dutch Week` at the Castle and he'd caught up with Tommy Wonder and even gotten to chat at length with Milt Larsen, so he was very excited to join us for this leg of the tour, despite his lack of sleep.

Mark, Sue-Anne and I took the shuttle to the Reno Hilton where Jeff Hobson had arranged complimentary, interconnecting rooms for us. He'd left a message for us to call him when we arrived and we ended up joining him and his family, Yvonne, Ian, Ivy and Avalon for lunch at Chevy's American Restaurant in the hotel. Jeff kept treating us all throughout the visit, so we decided to try to repay his generosity in one way or another. We eventually found a florist in the area nearby and ordered a big bunch of flowers which Sue-Anne presented him by tossing them onto the stage at the end of his show that night. He got such a surprise he said it was a moment he'd talk about for quite some time!

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JANUARY 10 - Reno: The next night, not only did we get to see 'Carnival of Wonders' again, but Hobson gave us the backstage tour of "one of the largest stages in the world". Once you see all the props stored in the wings (and Hobson's dressing room, which was originally built in the wings for Frank Sinatra) you can begin to understand just how big this enormous stage is.

Then Jeff drove us into downtown Reno for a special surprise. He took us through a few casinos before showing us the 'Fortune Cookie' slot machine... What was the big surprise? Hobson had done all of the voices on the machine. Jeff then took us to his favourite cigar bar where he and Mark enjoyed cigars and Martinis and we all chatted into the early hours.

JANUARY 11 - Sacramento: The next morning we got up, had brekky at the buffet downstairs, and took the shuttle to the airport where we picked up our rental car. It was a squeeze fitting all of our luggage into a small car together with the three of us, but we did it. It wasn't for very long though, because we took a detour to an Office Depot where Mark went crazy buying all manner of odd stationery, including an American flag we could proudly fly from the window of our car. Well... It was proudly displayed for a little while... Until Sue-Anne was trying to open her car window while driving on the freeway to Sacramento, but she pushed the wrong button and Mark's flag flew straight off the car and onto the road. We pulled up, but I was too late to save it, and a huge truck ran over it and it literally exploded under the truck's tyres.

The scenery from Reno to Sacramento was amazing, with snow all around us, right in the middle of the desert. We stopped at the little town of Truckee for a snack, and a play in the snow (more photos!) then continued on to Sacramento.

That night we headed off to the Grand Illusions Magic Shop where they had cleared all the counters aside and set up space for us on a little stage. They were very well prepared and had obviously had a lot of lectures there before. Inside we found a great selection of Halloween goodies including customised street signs like "Haunted Lane" and "Skeleton Street". We bought a great rubber snake for our Crocodile Hunter sketch, and a huge rubber skeleton which we had posted back to Australia to be installed in our front room.

JANUARY 12 - Las Vegas: The next day we took off early (5am) to drive to San Francisco to catch a flight to Las Vegas. Once again we were singled out to have all our bags searched, but this time they explained why: we were foreigners, and we had one-way tickets. Apparently, that made us a potential threat to US security... The lady who checked us in was very nice though, and she must have felt sorry for us as she upgraded us to First Class. This was very nice, but as Mark spilled several drinks and started an ice cube fight... I don't think we'll be upgraded again soon.

Once we got into Vegas, I was VERY disappointed to discover that our big suitcase had its front pocket ripped off... The pocket which had our February and March itineraries in it!!! Luckily, we discovered the itineraries had been packed back into the case by whichever baggage handler saw them get ripped out of the pocket. However, the bag was badly damaged and America West Airlines promised to have it repaired. They told us to leave the bag at the Riviera Hotel's bell desk at 8am Monday morning (it was Saturday afternoon) and it would be returned that afternoon.

We took a shuttle to the Riviera Hotel and bumped into Billy McComb and Dan Garrett as we were checking in. The receptionist charged us the "walk-in rate" of \$29, but Mark had booked the week before via the internet, so he was charged the regular "convention discount rate" of \$109!!! Needless to say, we were not impressed by their bizarre price structure.

We headed out for the day and Sue-Anne and I were lucky enough to get tickets to see 'O' that night, and 'Siegfried & Roy' the next night. We headed off to the Venetian to explore the beautiful shopping area, and to have dinner in St Mark's Square. That night we went in to see Melinda's show at the Venetian's C2K Theatre and Mark excitedly had his photo taken with her afterwards.

Sue-Anne and I left Mark to shop in the Bellagio while we went inside their theatre to see 'O', and it was amazing. We still think La Nouba is the best Cirque Du Soleil show we've ever seen, but 'O' was absolutely mind-blowing. Artistically puzzling and beautiful, while technologically staggering.

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JANUARY 13 - Las Vegas: The next morning we had hoped to spend shopping (I'd only brought one pair of pants for the whole trip!!!) but the convention was starting that afternoon. We took a walk up to the Fashion Show Mall, but it was being renovated so most of the good shops were closed or gone. After a quick lunch I left Mark and Sue-Anne to shop while I took a cab to Kinko's to get some more lecture notes copied. I put the order in, checked the internet, and headed back to the Riviera where the opening event (The Bull Session, where anyone can perform) was about to begin. We'd convinced Mark that he should do something too, so he got up and did his presentation of the Hundred-Dollar Bill Switch which went over well. Obie O'Brien had us close the show with the 6 Card Rap.

We scoured the dealers and chatted to many friends including: Stan Allen, Peter Reveen, Norm Nielsen, Ali Bongo, Tommy Wonder, Joe Stevens (he showed us an amazing psychic table), James Cielen, Greg Wilson, Gregory Wilson, Daryl & Alison, Topas, Roxanne, Max Maven, Martin Lewis, Terry Seabrooke, Whit Haydn, Dan Garrett, Domenico Dante, Eugene Berger, Boris Wild, Amazing Jonathon, Otto Wesley, and so many more...

Sue-Anne and I headed off to see Siegfried & Roy at the Mirage (which was, as expected, spectacular) while Mark stayed and mingled at the opening night Cocktail Party. When we returned we all headed inside to watch Don Drake give a very interesting lecture on Black Art.

JANUARY 14 - Las Vegas: Next day, up early because it was time to give our lecture. We only had 60 minutes to do our usual 140 minute presentation... It was a real race against time condensing it into one hour, but it was very well received.

We couldn't decide what show to see that night, so instead we went up the street to The Peppermill where we had a meal in "real old-vegas" atmosphere. We also played a joke on Gregory Wilson (we told the waitress to mistake him for David Blaine, and she played it up to the hilt!) and the joke became the underground talk of the convention.

Then it was back to the hotel for the cabaret show featuring Whit Haydn, Fielding West, Chef Anton (with incredible trick pool shots) and Gazzo, the politically incorrect street performer who caused a real stir. Mark stayed up for the 'School For Scoundrels' midnight lecture (which started around 2am!) but we went to bed.

JANUARY 15 - Las Vegas: Next morning we did our second lecture while Mark spent the morning at the Forum Shops in Ceasar's (waiting for them to open...)

That night, we got ourselves organised and went off to dinner at Ceasar's Magical Empire. It cost \$US75 per head, but the experience was well worth it. We had a great meal, very experienced cast of characters entertaining us, we bumped into Dan Harlan in the central area and saw Alain Nu do some fantastic close up while Joseph Gabriel did a slick job in the 'Sultan's Palace'. He had a very boisterous heckler too, which gave us the chance to see him in a more spontaneous performance mode.

After the Empire, we strolled back through the Forum Shops (Closed. Mark was too early before, we were too late now!) We walked back to the hotel and again Mark stayed up late (to watch Pendragon tape a video on the Humber ring) while we went off to bed.

JANUARY 16 - Las Vegas: Wednesday morning Mark went off to see the Star Trek Experience at the Hilton (which he said was FANTASTIC!). After the convention officially ended, we headed down to the "VIP Reception" and enjoyed sitting, chatting, and networking with all the "stars". We finally excused ourselves and the Aussie trio spent our last night together at Circus Circus (where Sue-Anne won a great big teddy that Mark had to take home in his suitcase).

JANUARY 17 - San Diego: The next morning we said a sad farewell to Mark and took the shuttle to the Alamo Car Rental Depot and drove out of Las Vegas towards San Diego. Dick Dale drove to "pick us up" at 6pm and took us to an amazing little magic museum run by the local news anchorman (an avid magician himself).

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JANUARY 18 - Hollywood: The next day was a drive up to Los Angeles and into Hollywood. Not as scary as I'd expected it to be. We checked into the Magic Hotel and took a stroll down Hollywood Blvd. Lunch at Hamburger Hamlet, visits to Hollywood Magic, Frederick's of Hollywood, and Hollywood Toys. We even bumped into Topas and Roxanne walking down the street!

The lecture that night was for the Fellowship of Christian Magicians, as well as about a dozen Magic Castle Members who were invited by the FCM. Joe Marotta was a great host and looked after us very well. Gordon Bean and Bruce Cervon also stuck their heads in during the night. Danny Archer was performing upstairs in the Parlour so it was great to touch base with him too. After the lecture we strolled through the Castle and ended up chatting to Danny Sylvester, who said he'll be touring with Chuck Jones through Australia later this year.

JANUARY 19 - Long Beach: The next day we had lunch at Johnny Rockets in the new 'Highland Hollywood' complex and found a great shop called 'Attack of the Killer B's'. We ended our Hollywood experience with a visit to Grauman Chinese Theatre to see the film 'Black Hawk Down'. Then, the big 46 minute drive to Long Beach (which took about 90 mins due to Los Angeles' notorious traffic).

The lecture was in the Farmer's and Merchant's Bank and they even had a stage for us. Dan Harlan was there, and Gregory Wilson popped in and interrupted the lecture about ten minutes into it (was this his revenge?) distributing advertising for Danny Archer.

JANUARY 20 - Blythe: The next morning we went off to the Fountain Valley Baptist Church, then drove off on the big journey to Phoenix! After an uneventful 4 hours or so of driving through the desert, we pulled into the little town of Blythe, California, and stayed overnight in a motel.

JANUARY 21 - Phoenix: Next morning it was up again bright and early to continue our trek to Phoenix. Just over the Arizona border we saw hundreds and hundreds of RVs all parked in the middle of the desert. It was like that scene from Close Encounters of the Third Kind where everyone had gathered at the mountains to see the aliens land. RVs everywhere you looked! Apparently, it was some kind of gem stone event where people came from everywhere to look at rocks. (And you thought magicians were weird!)

An hour or so into the drive we pulled in at a truck stop and found an internet machine where we spent 30 minutes (and lots of \$\$\$) checking our email. Then we continued on through Arizona.

The lecture in Phoenix was in a large empty office space used, sometimes, as a nightclub and other times as a magic club meeting room. One guy there, Ed, said he considered Hen Fetsch the best lecturer he'd ever seen, and thought we were right up there with him. We were also very favourably compared to Liz and Tommy Tucker! Mandy Davis, from The Magic Circle in London, was there, and the guy I gave the resurrected can to turned out to be, as I found out later, George Sands!!!

JANUARY 22 - Tucson: The lecture that night was in a little lecture theatre in "The Ranchers Club" behind the Sheraton Hotel. A small crowd of about 25, but very enthusiastic with lots of questions We ended up doing an extra long lecture for them. (7.20-11.00pm!)

JANUARY 23 - St Louis: Up really early the next morning (4.30am) to combat security at the airport. We arrived at 5.40am, returned our rental car, and went to check in. It was great because there was no line! But our joy was short lived. As usual, they hand searched our suitcases, taking out and examining everything... However, because we had arrived so early, they put us onto an earlier flight to St Louis. We passed through security (show photo ID, tickets, get X-rayed, removed jackets and lap tops etc). Then it was on to the gate where again we, and all other "foreigners" were singled out as the "security officers" rifled through all of our possessions and patted us down. Again, we were the last ones to board the plane.

After the usual delays, we moved slowly as we picked up our baggage, took a shuttle to Alamo car rental's depot, then got a car (well, a van, as they'd "upgraded" us), then drove to the Holiday Inn Viking. This was quite a nice hotel. We had lunch at Fuddrucker's Hamburgers and I (finally) bought a

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pair of pants!!! (Yay!) Our lecture that night was in a tiny meeting room in the hotel (the Webster room) and it was very well received.

JANUARY 24 - Kansas City: The next day we drove to Kansas City, about 5 hours away, and checked in at the Super 8 Motel. The lecture was in the Holiday Inn next door to the Super 8 where the local club had organised a great meeting room for us to use. They'd set up a stage, and a PA and got a really good roll-up. David Sandy, IBM Vice President and Tom Mullica's manager, introduced us and really enjoyed the lecture.

JANUARY 25 - Des Moines: Big 4 hour drive and we headed on to the Clarion Hotel in Des Moines where we were met by Bill Trotter. The lecture venue tonight was a private room in the back of an "all-you-can-eat" buffet called Baker's Cafeteria. The lecture went so well that when we opened the door to the main restaurant, all the other customers had gone and the staff were sitting there waiting for us to finish so they could close up!

JANUARY 26 - Franklin Park: Next day we drove 7 hours to Franklin Park. Our lecture was at Midwest Magic where Tim Felix had set up the back room of his shop for 25 people (and, it was packed). Tim was very helpful, and we also met Mona Santow, who puts together Photolog on Ben Harris' website. She took heaps of photos of the lecture which she sent on to us.

JANUARY 27 - Chicago: Sunday, we slept in, and drove 40 mins in to Chicago for our "day off". We checked into the Hyatt Regency where we'd been upgraded to a beautiful suite. We spent the day walking around Navy Pier, on Lake Michigan, and then went into a cinema and caught The Mothman Prophecies. We grabbed some snacks from a grocery store and went back to our hotel and watched the Stephen King 'Rose Red' mini-series on TV.

JANUARY 28 - Chicago: Monday, and we wandered around Chicago looking at shops and visited the library where we checked our internet messages again. That night we headed off to Magic Inc and, after getting lost on the way, we finally arrived. It's a great looking shop, with a little theatre in the back where they run workshops and lectures. Jay Marshall was there (he lives there!) and he was a very gracious host. Eugene Berger was also there and, as Jay announced, "to tell you how good this lecture is, Gene Berger has turned up to see it for the second time... And he's actually bought a ticket!"

JANUARY 29 - Moline: After Chicago we headed to Moline where we started driving into the snow. Very light snow started to fall when we got to the hotel. We did our lecture in a little community hall for about 25 people sitting at tables,

JANUARY 30 - Indiana: The next morning we woke up to quite a snow fall. As we drove down the highway the snow fell faster and thicker and then, suddenly, it was gone! The rest of the drive to Indiana was chilly, but no snow. We did the lecture that night in a Masonic Hall (the Mystic Lodge) and the folk there really enjoyed it - but we did have to get out of the building very quickly as the caretaker had to leave by 10pm.

JANUARY 31 - Columbus Magifest: Next day, it was a drive to Columbus for the MagiFest. We had an early start because we had to get to Columbus in time to check in to the hotel, return the car to the airport, and do a little shopping (we had lunch at Subway and then carried cartons of Coke back to the hotel from the Giant Eagle supermarket) all before Sue-Anne whizzed off to the hairdressers. Meanwhile, I set up for the close-up shows and we caught up with LOTS of people including Martin Lewis, David Williamson (who flew off to Hawaii for a gig the next day at 4am), John Carney, Mike Caveney, Jessica Reed, Peter Buoyie, and Joshua Jay and his dad. That night we did 3 close-up sets and got GREAT reactions, with standing ovations in some rooms.

FEBRUARY 1 - Columbus Magifest: The next day was not quite as busy... We did our three close up shows at 1pm, then chatted, mingled, and ended up being taken out by Larry & Tim (of the Battle of the Magicians) along with Joshua Jay and his dad (and Michael P Lair who rolled up too) to a huge restaurant called 'The Spaghetti Warehouse'. Next up was the evening show in the Veteran's Auditorium: Mike Caveney emceed and did his usual bits, Tina Lenert was up first with her mop act,

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then it was Jessica Reed with her dove act, Tom Burgoon with off the wall comedy (Timmy Toilet Paper!!!), and that was just the first half. The funniest thing was the incredibly long line at the men's toilet! Drew Thomas and his illusion company did the entire second half. His "illusion technician" (a young guy) did a solo spot with a "crackerjack" themed act. After the show, we stayed up and watched Joshua Jay's lecture, and managed to catch the start of David Grove's lecture before heading off to bed.

FEBRUARY 2 - Columbus Magifest: Next day was our panic day. We decided to try to put together our "Crocodile Hunter" act and rehearsed the snaked card stab (once) over the hotel bed and it looked great. 1pm, three more close up shows. 3pm, Obie O'Brien presented us with our FFFF MVP Plaque for 2001, and we did our lecture, which was VERY well received. 5pm we were still signing things. 6pm we had a run through of the show, and at 7pm we did the first of two evening shows. The Crocodile Hunter sketch worked very well, except that we got the wrong "volunteer" up on stage and then wrestled him to the ground... And our snake split the card in half instead of stabbing it. The second show was just as funny, but the snake stabbed the card, but without even touching the deck! Martin Lewis did well as an emcee, Oscar Munoz was very good, and John Carney was very funny as Mr Mysto. We all had fun. Then it was late night pizza in the hotel foyer afterwards!

FEBRUARY 3 - Columbus: The next day we ran our intensive session from 9-12 (almost to 1pm!!) for a sell-out crowd of 20. After the session, we planned to get some work done, but after lunch we just collapsed and slept until the evening. We woke up in time to watch the Superbowl and order pizza for tea in our room.

FEBRUARY 4 - Detroit: Up the next morning and we loaded everything into Jep Hostleter's car, and he took us to the airport where we got our next rental car from Alamo. Then it was driving off to Detroit. It got quite snowy and REALLY cold. The lecture was at the Garden City Magic Shop and though it was freezing outside, but the crowd inside really cooked! Packed crowd, great reception! Carlos and his wife, like many others we'd met, were also Christian Magicians, and I did MagicSports to one of the Gospel music CDs.

FEBRUARY 5 - Cincinnati: Next morning we drove another 5 hours to Cincinnati where we got to lecture at the legendary "Haine's House of Cards", the place where they actually manufacture trick decks. They had a big back room where they hold their magic meetings and we were amazed to see the room absolutely packed with almost 60 people. A great turn out for them, and they said it was because of the good word about us at MagiFest that people were coming out of the woodwork to see what all the fuss was about! Some people who had just seen us at MagiFest came back to see us again tonight!

FEBRUARY 6 - Louisville: Next day it was a 3 hour drive to Louisville, Kentucky. It was getting quite cold and snowing by the time we arrived at the Executive West Hotel, but the chap who booked the lecture was Bob Escher (distant cousin of M. C. Escher) and national president of the IBM, and he made sure we were well looked after.

FEBRUARY 7 - Nashville: The next day we were off to Nashville, 4 hours drive away. Nashville was also snowing. The Nashville lecture was in the back room of a church and the Pastor who let us in was so friendly that Sue-Anne passed on his invitation to the lecture attendees to visit the church on Sunday.

That night, as we were starving, we normally had breakfast, late lunch, then tried to get a snack before or after the lecture. Tonight, we ate at Waffle House. A creepy experience if ever there was one... Think the diner in any Twilight Zone episode...

FEBRUARY 8 - Memphis: The next day was Friday, so that meant Memphis and the Red Roof Inn. Jim Surprise was our contact, and the lecture was in a community meeting room which was quite cosy. Good turn out and great response again.

I should pause to explain that, once again (it happened at almost every hotel) the check-in lady wanted to know how I would be paying for the room. As usual I would have to explain that the man

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who booked the room was paying for it. She, of course, had no record of this, even though she had his name and credit card details (no phone number). Eventually, I was able to phone him and he explained that he'd already paid for the room in full. This sort of thing was the rule, not the exception, when checking in to hotels.

FEBRUARY 9 - Murfreesboro: The next day we did something "touristy" as we had just enough time to visit Graceland. It wasn't crowded at all so we spent two hours and \$16 each and did the tour of the house. Quite a break to take some time off like that, we even had a meal in the the Elvis Chrome Grill (Sue-Anne had meatloaf, "Thank you very much..")

Unfortunately, our detour almost made us late for our next stop... We had to drive back to Nashville, then a bit past it to Murfreesboro. It was well worth it in the end as we had a good crowd (some had seen us in Nashville and had come back for more!).

That night, needed a box of matches, Americans only seem to have books of matches, so I went to the nearby gas station to try to get some. No luck. So I tried the shop next door to the gas station which, of all things, was a fireworks shop. (The "World's Largest Fireworks Shop" to be precise, I think it's a chain, they're all up and down the interstates and they *all* claim to be the world's largest.) Anyway, he didn't have matches either, but I thought it was odd his shop was right next to a gas station... Until I saw another fireworks shop that WAS a gas station!

FEBRUARY 10 - Philadelphia: Off early the next morning to Nashville airport where we had our checked luggage searched again, this time by a nice man who not only knew what he was doing but had people skills as well!!!! Finally, after being searched again before being allowed to board the plane, we flew off to Philadelphia via Chicago. In Chicago our boarding passes said that we were okay to board the plane! NO SEARCHING!!!! But my elation was short lived as the lady plucked me aside for a "random" search.

Anyway... We got to Philadelphia and picked up our Budget car and Sue-Anne drove down the freeway through such bitter sleet we could barely see through the windows. That, combined with me missing the turn off to Marc DeSouza's house, meant we drove on many other freeways we didn't want to be on. Not only that, but after we phoned Marc for directions, the instant he told us where to go I heard a crash and a car knocked a telephone pole down across the very road we had to take. Sue-Anne didn't care anymore at this stage and, while all the other cars looked for alternate routes, we just drove over the damage and headed to Marc's place!

Finally we did arrive, and Marc's house was gorgeous! A wonderful "palace" some call "Magic Castle East Wing". He was in the process of moving, but it still looked great. Hundreds and thousands on magic books, videos, dvds, posters and memorabilia. Plus eclectic collections of movies, signed pictures of stars, and signed guitars! Add to that his own private 32 seat tiered theatre... What a house! We did have to sleep in a room with two creepy ventriloquist dolls watching us though...

FEBRUARY 11 - Philadelphia: The lecture was the next day, so we visited the mall in the morning after doing internet at Marc's computer. At the mall, we got Marc a great t-shirt which read "Keep staring and I might do a trick!" The lecture that night was GREAT! Huge and very responsive crowd!

FEBRUARY 12 - Baltimore: Next day we headed off early to Baltimore. The lecture was in Kenzo's Magic Shop and they had a fully equipped theatre upstairs. Great turn-out again, including Bob Sheets (who said we reminded him, in a very positive way, of Bob Fitch), Eric Henning (from the EG) and Betty Rexine, who had met Sue-Anne at the Battle of the Magicians last year. We all went across the road for drinks and desserts after the lecture and got back to our hotel quite late.

FEBRUARY 13 - New Jersey: Next stop Linden, New Jersey. The traffic was getting much, much worse! The Swan Motel seemed rather odd... was it the bath in the bedroom? The creepy flickering neon sign? Or, as we found out the next morning, the fact that it was opposite a cemetery! The lecture that night went very well, with a good crowd of 48.

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FEBRUARY 14 - Yonkers: We had breakfast the next morning in the diner next door, with the laziest staff in the world. This was followed by a 20 minute drive into New York, which took two hours... the traffic is un-be-lievable! The lecture that night was on Valentine's Day, so when 20 people showed up (hey, magicians have no love lives!) we weren't disappointed.

FEBRUARY 15 - New York City: Friday. Time to do the thing we'd dreaded most, drive into New York itself! It was an incredibly stressful journey through a maze of cars, honking mercilessly if you should be stupid enough not to accelerate immediately the light turned green. There was no parking at the hotel so we weren't sure if we should stay there or just skip it and drive out of NYC that night instead. In the end, we parked in a garage nearby, and the room was VERY nice! We took a cab to the venue, Fordham University, and literally "lectured" to the group in a tiered lecture theatre with desks. The group was SAM #1 (Parent Assembly) and everyone warned us that these guys would give us a hard time, but they were great. A few came to see the lecture for the THIRD time, and said they got something more from it every time they saw it!

FEBRUARY 16 - Albany: By leaving New York City early, we arrived in Albany about 30 minutes sooner than we expected, despite stopping at several roadside service areas to grab a bite to eat, change drivers and stretch our legs. Albany still had some snow on the ground, even though it hadn't snowed in ages, so it was more ice than snow which is probably why Sue-Anne wouldn't let me through it at her...

The afternoon lecture was very well attended. They don't normally have lectures at that hour so it was a pleasant surprise for all of us. Bruce Barnett was there too, he supplied some CDs for MagicSports and we even got a standing ovation. After the lecture, we went and checked into our hotel, then joined a few of the folk for an early dinner.

FEBRUARY 17 - Rochester: The next day was Sunday and it was off to Rochester for another afternoon lecture. We arrived in time, checked into our Super 8 Motel, and made our way to the lecture venue (a church hall) through the falling snow! Once again they got a surprisingly large turnout (including Professor Rem's twin brother) and at the end we had to have someone scrape the snow off our windscreen before we could leave!

We followed the crowd to the "Country Buffet" where we enjoyed some more eating and chatting before excusing ourselves as I had to see the special Pay Per View WWF event 'No Way Out'. We couldn't get it at our hotel, so we ended up going to see it at 'Hooters'... Quite an experience, but at least I got my dose of sports-entertainment!

FEBRUARY 18 - Buffalo: The next day we had a short drive to our next venue, so we took advantage of the situation by doing laundry and a bit of shopping in the morning. At the CompUSA store we saw the new Apple G4, an amazing computer with a massive flat cinema screen. It was about US\$2900, but they said we couldn't take it into Australia. It was made in the USA, it's powerful enough to run a missile base, so they only sell it to certain countries like Japan. Not Australia though... Some allies!!!

Anyway, we raced off to Buffalo where we presented our lecture in a unique venue called 'The Screening Room' where people come to watch old movies. Mike Hilburger, our friend from FFFF, was there so it was great to catch up again. We ended up later that night in a funny little diner with Mike and a few of the guys chatting into the early hours.

FEBRUARY 19 - Syracuse: Next day we drove three hours from Buffalo to Syracuse where we stayed at the Lemoyne Manor. The place only had two pairs of power points in the whole room. I unplugged a lamp and went to plug the computer and was showered with sparks. Quite shocking!

That night we did the show in the hotel's "nightclub". I kept hitting my head on some low hanging light-fittings over the stage, but other than that, it all went very well.

FEBRUARY 20 - Denver: Wednesday we got up early, posted off another package of excess luggage back to Australia, and headed off to the Syracuse airport where, once again, we had our

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baggage searched, we got searched, our carry on got searched... You know the deal. We got out onto the runway and the pilot announced that, due to bad weather in Chicago, our take off was delayed by 30 mins. So we sat there, in the plane on the runway, so other planes could use our gate, for half an hour.

We got to Chicago and RAN to the connecting flight and arrived in Denver on time. After collecting our car at Alamo (a saga in itself...) we drove to Danny Archer's place. On the way, a hobo carrying a sign saying "Everybody needs help sometime, please help me" approached our car. Just as Sue-Anne was beginning to feel sympathetic towards his plight, he started screaming obscenities at us asking "What the \$%% did you ever do for this country, I fought for this country, what the #%% did you do?" Sue-Anne told him we weren't even Americans, so he said "Get the #%%\$ out of the country!" We went to McDonald's instead.

Finally, we arrived at Danny Archer's house, and though the hour was late, it was great to catch up and compare notes.

FEBRUARY 21 - Fort Collins: We slept in a little the next day, got some paperwork done with Danny, had a Mexican lunch with him, then headed off to Fort Collins for our lecture. We were almost late in arriving to the lecture that night, as it was in the back room of a government building and quite tricky to find, but it started on time and was received very well.

After the lecture, we headed down in to the old part of town with some of the guys to taste some home made ginger ale at a boutique brewery.

FEBRUARY 22 - Denver: The next day it was a quick drive to Denver where we went to the wrong hotel. How were we to know there were two 'Ramada Inns' on Colfax Avenue?! We headed down the road for the lecture which was held in an old folks home. The room was so well heated we had to open all the doors and windows just to survive. Danny Archer introduced us, it was the first time he'd seen the lecture and, luckily, we got a standing ovation. Afterwards, we headed off to the 'International House of Pancakes' for a late night snack...

FEBRUARY 23 - Colorado Springs: The next day we drove to Colorado Springs for our final American lecture. The lecture was in a small church hall for a small group of locals, and the President of the club was a lady called "Marina" (I think) who's attitude was quite an inspiration for Sue-Anne.

FEBRUARY 24 - On the plane: The next day we got up early, returned our hire car and went through the most intensive baggage search so far. We took the plane to Dallas, and then came across a weird example of the inconsistencies of international travel. We walked into the gate at Dallas to fly to Paris, but we didn't have to go through customs or passport control. They told us we'd do it when we got to France.

In France, we just filled in a form and walked straight through customs no questions asked. Well, the French man at the counter gave Sue-Anne a flirty smile and checked her out, but that was it.

Oh, on the flight, Sue-Anne did the amazing vanishing and reappearing breakfast trick on my tray. You'll have to ask us about it...

FEBRUARY 25 - Paris: Arriving in Paris, David Stone was there to meet us and what a pleasure that was! We all crawled into his tiny two-door car and covered Sue-Anne in luggage and drove into Paris where David dropped us off at one of his three apartments. We had it all to ourselves and the decor was typically David. We had a little rest before David came back to take us out to lunch. He brought a friend called Nikola, who used to be one of David's students but now was a colleague.

We had a lovely lunch at David's favourite restaurant, then we did a little shopping, got our milk and cokes and headed off (this time with FOUR in the car) to Le Double Fonde for the lecture. Le Double Fonde is a tiny close-up magic bar which has been operated by Dominique Duvivier and his daughter Alexandra for years. The set up was excellent and we got a full house of about 45 people. Alexandra

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translated the lecture very well, and the reaction was tremendous. (David said he was very proud of us!)

FEBRUARY 26 - Paris: We didn't wake up until after 12 the next day and David and Nikola took us out to explore Paris. We toured Montmartre and had crepes for lunch. Then we got quite an extensive tour of the city by car before we were dropped out at the theatre to see Arturo Brachetti's amazing quick change show.

We had to catch a 7am flight out of Paris the next morning so we tried staying up all night by going off to a Pizza restaurant (apparently there aren't that many late night eateries in Paris!). However, we gave up and went back to the apartment after midnight. We said goodbye to David and Nikola after David booked a cab for us, then went to bed around 1am and woke again around 4am.

FEBRUARY 27 - Innsbruck (via Paris, London & Munich!): The cab didn't turn up at 5am, so we had to phone David who kindly booked us another one. In the end we got to the airport in plenty of time and our flight from Paris to London was only about 40 minutes or so, then about 90 mins to Munich.

In Munich, after I almost got crushed by our luggage on the travelator, we picked up our car and couldn't get it started. Then we couldn't find our way out of the car park. Then Sue-Anne got an attack of the hysterical giggles when the car park machine told her "Gute Fahrt!" She kangaroo-hopped the car all the way to the service station where we bought a sticker for the autobahn then, away we went! 160kmh all the way to Innsbruck where we had to find our hotel and, after a quick rest, do a lecture for about 10 people who certainly seemed to enjoy the lecture! Then it was off to a restaurant where we ate goulash soup and watch the others eat Austrian sausages with mustard.

FEBRUARY 28 - Vienna: After Innsbruck, we had a big drive to Vienna where we stayed in a sort of Youth Hostel type of hotel, with shiny wood floors and single beds pushed together, which was conveniently located opposite Magic Christian's house. His house used to be a series of apartments, and now he rents some out, lives in others, and has a small downstairs section converted into the headquarters for the Vienna Magic Circle. Magic Christian was extremely hospitable to us. He translated the lecture and made sure we were well looked after. The lecture, though cut short to accommodate the time taken up by the translations, went down VERY well, and we got standing ovations and one of our best reactions of the tour.

After, a few of us including Gaetan Bloom, Alexandra De Cova and his wife Barbara, all went out to dinner at a Greek restaurant, the owner, a famous Greek/German singer, even gave us a copy of his CD.

MARCH 1 - Vienna: The next day we tried to go to a coffee shop for breakfast, but the smoke in the "traditional" Viennese cafes was just too thick. We finally settled on a slightly less smokey cafe, and Sue-Anne had breakfast, the waitress forgot to bring mine...

We spent some time with Magic Christian, then he took us to the next lecture at one of the other magic clubs in Vienna...(they have 6!)

MARCH 2 - Salzburg: The next day we had a tour of Vienna courtesy of Magic Christian, followed by a traditional Austrian lunch with his family (he even gave us a wonderful copy of his prized Hofszinser book) then we drove off to spend two days off in Salzburg. We found a little hotel which seemed good enough, had a pizza dinner, then went to bed.

MARCH 3 - Salzburg: The next day we strolled through Salzburg and did touristy things like looking at the fort and at Mozart's house, then we had a Mozart dinner-concert for our tea.

MARCH 4 - Munich: Monday we had a big drive back to the Munich Airport where Thomas Fraps picked us up and took us into his little apartment in central Munich. We performed with Thomas, Gaston, Jorg and Pit in their "Magic Monday" show and we had a ball! Gaston and Thomas did their FISM award-winning Mr Punch act, while Pit played Heinz. It was all in German, but it was great fun.

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We did the Razor Blades, Invisible Deck, the Geller Drink Trick, the Rap etc. in English, but the crowd seemed to like it! Afterwards, we all went back to a very special restaurant for snacks, but the best was yet to come!

MARCH 5 - Munich: The next day was the "Magic Tuesday" show on which Sue-Anne and I were the featured guests. Pit had to leave Munich for another gig, but Helge happened to be in town, so we still had a handful of Fingers. We collaborated on a crazy idea where Sue-Anne and I spoke live with subtitles (courtesy of Gaston and Thomas) and after Sue-Anne and I did our set we all got to play MagicSports! It was Gaston's birthday and, apparently, playing MagicSports with us there was a great present as far as he was concerned. (But we gave him a Kangaroo Scrotum as a gift anyway!)

We played Drunk Tech (me with Bavarian Rings and Gaston and Helge with a Ballet-style Cups and Balls), the Arms Expert (with Sue-Anne and I interviewed by Thomas), and finally Card Story (where Sue-Anne divined the chosen card). It was all GREAT fun and we can't wait to either get the guys down to Australia in April or play MagicSports at FISM in June 2003.

MARCH 6 - Munich: The next day, after another really late night, Thomas took us into town where we toured around then went to see a movie (A Beautiful Mind) which was quite a relaxing break.

MARCH 7 - Munich: The following day we spent resting, and preparing for our lecture that night in Munich. Thomas drove us into town where we lectured in a hotel right above the central railway station. Thomas translated to the group of about 20 (many of whom came because they'd seen us at Magic Monday. After the lecture we went off for a more typical Bavarian supper. Gaston had managed to come out too so, despite the fact we had to leave for the airport at 9am the next day, we stayed around chatting until about 3am.

MARCH 8 - Birmingham: After a sad farewell to Thomas, and going through Munich Airport security in our socks, we flew direct to Birmingham. Birmingham was just as I'd expected of England. But, they do drive on the correct side of the road!

Keith Bennett was there to pick us up and he drove us to his house where we unpacked and then went with him to his shop... Where we stayed from 2-7pm. When we got back to his house, we all went out for a curry dinner (it's the English national dish nowadays).

MARCH 9 - Shrewsbury: The next day we went in to the shop again in the morning, and at about 2pm a colleague of his came to pick us up and drive us into Shrewsbury, about 50 mins from the shop. There, we checked into a cosy hotel after a nice tour of the very medieval town.

That night we did the banquet show which began with 'The Crocodile Hunter' sketch (plunged into total darkness when someone flicked the wrong light switch) and featured an improvised second segment "The International World Championships of Card Magic." Sue-Anne (the champ) began with the divination of a selected card after I (the challenger) picked her up trying to use a force. I did Invisible Deck, the she countered with the 8 cards. All throughout the MC commentated just like a sports event. Then we did the bill to banana (which they loved), the toast and drink tricks, and finished with the 6 Card Rap.

After the show (which was performed in the presence of British Ring President Mike Gancia and his wife Lady Elizabeth Warlock) I did a little close up for the crowd in the bar.

MARCH 10 - Birmingham: The next morning (Mother's Day!!!) we lectured for about 15 and that went quite well, though we had to stick to a timetable so everyone could at least get to Mother's Day lunch with their families. Keith picked us up and, took us back to Birmingham where he'd arranged that magicians who wanted to meet us could join us in an Indian Restaurant for dinner.

At Keith's house we also got to watch many videos including Derren Brown, and Penn & Teller's Egyptian Magic Special. (Superb!!!)

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MARCH 11 - Derby: Next day it was a stroll down the street to catch some fresh air and grab some supplies. We even did laundry! Then it was off to the next lecture in Derby, quite a drive. The lecture was in the upper room of a traditional British pub, and dedicated to a prominent club member who had passed away early that day.

MARCH 12 - Birmingham: Next day we spent more time in Keith's shop... We picked up a few props and some magic DVDs, then we headed off to lecture at the prestigious British Magical Society. The lecture went very well, with over 40 people in attendance.

We all headed back to Subway after the lecture (Keith, Sue-Anne and I, Jimmy Carlo "Sumo Illusionist" - great gimmick, Mark - an enthusiastic young guy and his friend Barrington). We enjoyed a good chat and were entertained by the antics of the drugged out locals.

After that, Jimmy Carlo came back to Keith's place where we watched some video footage of his hilarious Sumo act (what a way to turn the fact that he's a large man into an advantage), and his other acts including self-taught knife throwing! It was another late night.

MARCH 13 - Gloucester: The next day we strolled down the shops again, tried to do a little work on our new lecture (24 years), then headed off on a big drive to the Gloucester Magic Club. They met in a community hall, had a woman president and, surprise surprise, had a small roll up because it wasn't their regular night... There was a big soccer match.. etc etc. Basically, unlike in the USA, no-one had heard of us so no-one promoted us properly. We sold two sets of notes...

MARCH 14 - To South Africa: The next day we took the bus from the Birmingham Airport to Heathrow, and after a very pain free check in and comfortable wait in the BA Terraces lounge, we boarded the incredibly full flight to Cape Town, South Africa. Somehow, despite the fact that we checked in four hours in advance, we were seated in the centre section in the second last row... And Sue-Anne had a "kicker" behind her...

Anyway, we survived the flight well, I watched 'The Royal Tenenbaums' and 'Bandits' (both pretty weak films), and we arrived in Cape Town ahead of schedule at 8.45am.

MARCH 15 - Capetown: We got through the very long lines at customs very quickly (we stood in the line next to the "locals" line... Once the locals all go through, that line splits and moves very quickly). However, one of our bags didn't come off the plane! Luckily, as we were filling in a lost luggage form, it magically appeared on the conveyor belt and we got out of the terminal at 9.55am to be met by the amazingly smiling faces of Saul and David from The College of Magic.

Saul and David really looked after us well, taking us to the hotel and checking us in, treating us to a coffee in the dining room, then taking us out for lunch at the dock area where we were treated to fish and chips. Then we bought all the stuff we needed for the next few days of lectures and shows and were taken back to the hotel (via Century City, an absolutely HUGE shopping centre) where we relaxed for about 20 minutes.

Craig Mitchell and some of the staff from the College of Magic joined us, and Tommy Wonder, for dinner at a very nice seafood restaurant; though we all had the ostrich!

MARCH 16 - Capetown/Zimbabwe: The next day we joined Craig and Tommy for a visit to the College of Magic, an amazing place with dozens of kids in different classes all being taught various simple effects. One class were working on the "Computer Age Cards", another on different patter lines for the cups and balls, and another on "In The News". We joined in and did a few tricks too. We also saw David Dodgen's photo in a press clipping on the wall!

After our visit to the College, it was off to the airport where we flew to Zimbabwe via Johannesburg. On arrival in Zim, where we had to pay \$US30 arrival tax each (they only accept US dollars, their local currency is worthless. You could exchange US dollars at the official rate of 55, or in a money exchange booth for up to 300 in a booth where they would give you a receipt that said you got the official rate of 55 even though you didn't... Very weird system).

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The whole place was, apparently, very corrupt and slightly dangerous to be in, but the scenery was AMAZING! We were driven to the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge where our rooms overlooked a game reserve. We watched elephants, impalas, warthogs, and monkeys all gathering around a waterhole. As the manager of the hotel said "We don't have TV here... We have the National Geographic and Discovery Channels right outside your windows."

That night we went to The Boma, a traditional African restaurant complete with singing and dancing. Tommy and Sue-Anne received certificates for eating worms... I stuck to the crocodile.

MARCH 17 - Zimbabwe: Up early next day and we went to yet another country, we were driven to Botswana where we cruised for three hours up the Zambezi River seeing the most amazing wildlife so close it was scary sometimes. From there we had lunch in a jeep amongst a herd of elephants, then drove for another three hours where we spotted a pair of lionesses, giraffes, and zebras.

That night we had dinner in the Safari Lodge, watching the animals gather around the waterhole under floodlights.

MARCH 18 - Zimbabwe: The next day we went downtown (the town has only two streets) where we changed some money and went to see Victoria Falls. It costs \$US20 to see the falls, or the equivalent of \$US6 if you pay by Zim dollars... But you must have a receipt from the money changers!

The falls were spectacular, even I was impressed, and we all got quite pleasantly wet.

After we stopped off at The Kingdom resort for a fast food style lunch, before returning to our hotel to rest (I had a swim in the two beautiful pools) and then we took a river cruise at dusk just up from the falls where we saw even more hippos and crocodiles. Very, very relaxing...

We went back to the Lodge for supper (Sue-Anne and I ate dirt) and then spent our last night in Zimbabwe.

*(Unfortunately, that is where the diary ends! We headed back to Capetown where we performed and lectured at the South African Magic Championships. We flew back to Australia arriving home on **March 26**).*