

## 24th/25TH NOVEMBER - LOS ANGELES - PUNTA ARENAS

I was horribly jetlagged having flown in from London to Los Angeles the night before in order to attend a days worth of meetings. Hence, having gone to bed after dinner at about midnight i was wide awake at 3.00am and not due to leave for the airport until 9.30am. Unsurprisingly, i had the gym to myself at 4.00am and by 7.00am i was finishing off all my emails. At 9.30am i was feeling absolutely awful and bleary eyed as i lugged my huge 3 duffel bags into the suburban to join Luis's 5 bags. Travelling light was an understatement as the suburban had trouble pulling away from the hotel! We stayed at the Mosaic hotel in LA arranged by my sponsors Summit hotels and it was a really cool hotel located within close proximity to all the meetings that i had to get to on my one day in LA.

Luis and i were flying down to Punta Arenas together along with John Rost, who climbed with Adventure Consultants on Everest this spring. Vinson will hopefully be his last of the seven summits. He blames reading Dick Bass's book the Seven summits, which is a great read incidently, of costing him a huge amount of money to follow in Dick Bass's footsteps and tackle the highest peak on each continent.

I was really looking forward to returning to Chile. I have not been back since our incredible Everest expedition this spring. We had a lot of flying ahead, we were going from LA to Santiago and then connecting straight through to punta arenas at the southern most tip of Chile. After 17 hours of flying and stopping about 3 times en route we began our descent into Punta Arenas. The winds were incredible and blowing at 123kph and the plane was shaking and all over the place. I was screaming and clinging to Luis and John Rost said he could hear my screams from about 15 seats behind ours! how embarrassing. It was an incredible feat of the pilot to land the plane upright and we were then delayed as the steps to the plane couldnt get to us due to the winds! FInally we were all escorted off the plane one by one and almost blown off our feet as we precariously walked down the steps.

Hamish, my cameraman met us at the airport, he is tall and lanky with a wicked sense of humour. The rest of the day was spent doing gear checks, checking the tent, buying last minute items from the supermarket and getting our sledge bags and back packs sorted out. Luis was brutal on my weight that i was going to carry and it was with a long face i had to remove creams, extra clothes and other things that i thought were necessities from my bag. Hamish was there to capture my sulky face as my load was cut in half.

Kat and Rob, who are my friends climbing with Guys team, have been delayed in chicago due to bad weather so are scheduled to arrive in tomorrow night. The latest rumour is that we are going to try and fly to the ice tomorrow night after they arrive but it sounds too good to be true according to Luis. We are basically on standby here for the right weather conditions to fly down to the ice, some 6 hours further south where we land at Patriot Hills.

I saw the Russian illusion Jet at the airport, it looks hugely imposing and like it would look far more at home lifting military vehicles out of a warzone than flying our motley

crue to antarctica. How that beast of a plane is going to land on ice i have no idea, nor do i feel like being blown around up there again! We have to fly to Argentina after taking off from Punta Arenas as the runway here is being worked on and therefore we cant take off from Punta Arenas with a full tank of petrol. We fly to argentina to load up on fuel and then take off for antarctica from there.

We all had dinner last night in the smart hotel in town, myself being the token girl until kat arrives. We all gave Luis a huge amount of grief at dinner when his appetiser arrived ( this was after a lengthy conversation in spanish i have to add) and consisted of a plate of onions and a side of lettuce.. thank god we werent all sharing a tent tonight!! We went to bed around 11.00am and i still have a ton of organising to do tomorrow.

## 26TH NOVEMBER

I woke up around 8 after a great nights sleep and got to work on my diary. I then went and had breakfast with Hamish and at 10.00 we all attended our logistics meeting given by ALE which is the company that arrange for us all to fly down to antarctica. We had a briefing on weight restrictions, the delays we can expect to encounter with regards to weather, not standing too close to the illusion when it takes off from the ice and that sort of thing. There are about 40 of us flying on the first trip in which is scheduled to leave on 27th November. The illusion jet cannot land on the ice if there are crosswinds above 20mph so we need to permanently be on standby for a weather report from Patriot Hills. There are 30 or so people going to be climbing Vinson and the rest are people going to the south pole. We have to have all our bags ready to be collected and to be put on the illusion by 4.00pm today which is what ive spent the morning doing. I feel like i havent got enough clothes but thats because im generally overweight half the time!!

I did some interviews after the briefing as this is my first time to Chile since climbing Everest with the Chilean team. I was most upset when one journalist looked at me up and down and asked me why i wasnt taller!! My Jimmy choo shoes have obviously been left behind for my antarctica expedition so im in my flats much to the relief of Guy and co!!

Im now fully ready amazingly enough and as soon as my bags are collected to go to the illusion, i plan to brave the rain and go for a quick run. Our plane is piloted by 2 russian pilots, sacha and alexei who have flown in every war zone possible... they have even done formation flying in those illusion jets with 30 of them flying side by side so hopefully they can get us onto the ice ok!! im not looking forward to any of the flights that i have ahead and Hamish is trying to get me to sit in the nose cone of the jet so i can see the ice runway rushing up towards us... I guess he wants to see me crying on camera already at this early stage! I will keep u posted via dispatches or email tomorrow as to whether we have a window to get to the ice or whether we are still here in punta arenas tomorrow!

## 27th NOVEMBER

I woke up at around 6.00am feeling sick, i have a pounding head, fever and sore throat and im terrified in case we get called up to fly to the ice this morning. I presume given that it is now 6.00am and Guy or Luis has not knocked on my door that we are now waiting for the 10.00 weather briefing from ALE. I got up and had a shower and came and had breakfast, no eggs available ( so much for my bulking up prior to heading south into frigid temperatures) so i made do with coffee and a piece of toast.

Luis found me on the computer and confessed that he also was feeling ill, so we headed into town to get some medication. We returned back to the hotel and plied ourselves with drugs ( im holding off on the antibiotics for now but they are on standby!) and went and joined all the others who had by now surfaced.

Kat and Rob finally arrived at about 11.00pm last night, having had the journey from hell! It had taken them 3 days to get here and apparently their plane had 2 aborted landings at punta arenas before going to argentina to wait out the weather. They were not allowed off the plane there for 4 hours so when they finally got to our hotel they were up doing their gear checks until 2.00am ( i was delighted to find out that kats clothes also got axed in half by guy so we are all in the same boat on the weight front!!

The 10.00 briefing indicated that the weather is now cloudy over Patriot Hills with 30 knot winds so the illusion would not be able to land. The next briefing is at 4.00pm this afternoon...it really allows u very little time to do anything apart from stay within fairly close proximity to the hotel. We all went to our local lunch place, its starting to feel like groundhog day and this is only day 2 of waiting! We ordered Luis a plate of onions and a leaf of lettuce as a joke, he is now really not finding hamish and i at all funny.

Given that the weather here is a bluebird day, i really thought we would go but apparently not. I have been for a run and im now about to go over some filming ideas with hamish.

Luis has warned us that he waited for a flight for 2 weeks last year, so i could be very familiar with Punta Arenas soon! We have a great group of people with us which is good and Kat and Rob have brought a case of wine in case we do have to sit out a big weather window to take the edge off the wait! Lets hope we dont miss the call when it does happen!! I will report back in after 4.00pm today as to whether we are going to be going or not, its already a bit frustrating being permanently on standby i have to confess and this is only day 2!

28th NOVEMBER....

We had a fairly stressful afternoon yesterday as we had been on standby for the call to go to the airport all day, and given that Luis had been telling me it is very common to be stuck here a week, in my mind we were basically not going. I was also still feeling ill with flu and felt really lethargic. The phone call came in at 6.00pm and when i saw Luis stick his thumb in the air and say it was a "go" i was panic stricken. How could i fly to the ice feeling like this and i was so not mentally prepared. I rushed around like a headless chicken cramming all my excess stuff into bags to be left behind in this hotel and squeezing clothes into my backpack until it was almost the same size as me. I almost collapsed under its weight when i tried to hoist it onto my shoulders and the way id packed and distributed the weight was such that all the weight was on the top ( a big no no) and everytime i lent forwards i was sent flying forwards by my pack. I squeezed in a couple of phone calls to let people know i was now pretty much not going to be

contactable and everyone screamed at me to get off the phone as the bus pulled up to our hotel to take us to the airport.

On the bus i was reunited with Andronico, Misail, Ernesto and Andronico's sister Gabriella. I hadn't seen my team since Everest, so it was really nice to catch up with them all. We arrived at the airport, thank goodness for John Rost who took my communications box that i had been told to carry by Luis and already mislaid, i was really quite stressed out! We all went through security and there was the illusion jet sitting ominously on the tarmac waiting, it looks so imposing and out of context flying us climbers to the ice. It was a fairly short stint at the airport when we got the word that the winds in Patriot Hills had picked up and it was a no go! It's so stressful getting yourself mentally prepared to go and do it, and then you have the anti climax of not being able to go! I've been told to get used to it. We then all came back to our hotel, i almost broke my back lugging my bag out of storage and we all headed out to dinner at a seafood restaurant on the water. We had dinner, a big group comprising of nearly everyone going to Vinson. After dinner, Kat and i headed back to the hotel whilst the boys decided to all go out, which is why i imagine that i'm the only person up this morning! We are still on standby every 3 hours for weather reports from Patriot Hills. It's a sunny day here in Punta Arenas but it's not remotely indicative of the weather down in Antarctica and ALE have to factor in our detour via Argentina to refuel the plane too before they can give us the green light to go.

People are slowly surfacing here now, and i've just heard that our next check in time is noon, so i have a few hours to kill before then! It's definitely better to wait here in Punta Arenas than down on the ice, so i'm not going to complain too much yet, i mean we are only one day behind schedule right now let's hope it's not too many more!!

## 29th NOVEMBER

I was in the deepest sleep when i was awoken with Luis knocking on my door saying we were going. We had 45 minutes to get ready before being collected and taken to the airport. I leapt into the shower so i could wash my hair prior to " i don't know how many days of not being able to wash it or too cold to want to wash it" I shoved everything into my bag that was staying at the hotel in storage, grabbed my pack and was ready. In no time at all we were actually climbing up the ladder onto the illusion jet that looked like it was off to a war zone rather than dropping off a motley crew of climbers and south polers in Antarctica. I was not prepared for the seats to be parachuters style on the sides of the plane and a ton of gear in the middle. The gear comprised of anything from mattresses to a BBQ to huge barrels of fuel. I sat down with Hamish in the nearest available seat already feeling my anxiety about flying kicking in. We promptly got told by someone from ALE that we were selfish to just sit down in the nearest available seats and block up the narrow gangway and Hamish was not allowed to film. We were all given ear plugs to block out the noise of the four huge jet engines and i eyed all the loose wires hanging around us nervously. After the quickest safety briefing in history, just basically find a seat belt and do it up, we were hurtling down the runway at Punta Arenas. Soon this huge beast of a plane was airborne and we flew to Ushuaia in Argentina where we were to land on a

longer runway in order to be able to take off again with a full tank of fuel. the runway at punta arenas was under repair and therefore not long enough for the illusion to take off fully fuelled and loaded. Hamish and i were allowed to go into the glass nose cone of the plane which was just amazing. You can see everything from there. Vladimir was the navigation officer and he showed us one rather decrepped looking piece of equipment that was supposed to be guiding us and i thankfully spied a modern looking computer next door which was also helping navigate! It was incredible watching the runway bearing up on us as we sat in the cone, i prayed nothing went wrong now or Hamish, Vlad and i were toast. It was a great landing and soon we were in our isolation section at the airport. We were on the ground 2 hours and then in no time Hamish and i were back in the nose cone with Vladimir for the take off. I think i distracted him with too many questions and grabbing his leg during turbulence during the landing so i decided to try and be brave and i sat right on the glass and braced myself for take off. We were loaded with enough fuel to get to Antarctica and back to Punta Arenas if necessary ( lets hope that wasnt the case) If the crosswinds are more than 20 mph the plane cannot land on the ice.

It seemed forever that we hurtled down the runway, my face felt feet away from the tarmac. I was starting to panic as i saw the end of the runway and we were still going full guns along the ground, wehn we slowly pulled up and took off. It was a very bumpy take off and i soon began dry crying into hamish's leg much to his horror. He said it looked too rude to film! So here i am 2 hours into the flight, people are lying on the luggage and amazingly enough asleep in the very uncomfortable seats. The loo is a small bucket in the corner of the plane or else you could use your pee bottle if you were feeling brave. Im hoping we are going to be able to land, apparently the wind is picking up which isnt great news.

After four hours we were told to start getting into our down clothes as we were going to be landing soon. I started putting on layer after layer, got my hat and gloves ready and sweating profusely from the heat still coming out of the ventilators of the plane, prepared myself for the notion of landing on ice. I was clinging to my neighbours as we were about to land and soon there was a loud crunching sound and we were whizzing along the ice seemingly very fast! The doors opened and an icy blast blew in and soon we were treading on treacherously slippery ice in Antarctica, truly amazing. The next thing i knew was that Luis and i were to be on a seperate flight to the base of Vinson and we were going soon.. they were anticipating bad weather later and wanted to start flying us in now. I was a little upset as i didnt feel like getting stuck at vinson basecamp whilst all the others were at Patriot Hills, thats the last form of civilisation around here, and with a sulky face i was loaded onto the twin otter with Luis and five others being flown by 2 young canadian pilots. Amazingly enough the pilots had flown the twin otters to Antarctica from Canada! The flight was perfect, we took off on skis and i looked out at the huge white vastness of Antarctica from the plane. Soon we could see Vinson Massif and its neighbouring mountains. We landed on skis at our basecamp and loaded our bags onto sledges and towed them to our campsite. My sledge felt really heavy, luckily camp wasnt too far away! Luis and i spent the next 2 hours digging a wind wall, a kitchen and pitching the tent so that when Hamish arrived 2 hours later it was all ready for him - four seasons or what!! Its sunny outside right now and its 11.30pm at night. Rob and kat are drinking champagne next door! Rob has brought a case of wine and a case of champagne

for when they get married. They plan to get married on the summit of Vinson and the wine was for the party afterwards! We have had dinner and I'm going to be trying to sleep soon - it's been quite a day! Kat's mum very kindly gave me some very Joan Collins velvet scented lavender eye shades which the boys of given me copious amounts of grief about but I love them and they block out the light perfectly!

I've got my Chilean team camped next door which is great to spend time with them all on Vinson.

That's it for today, it's really great to be here finally and I'm exhausted from all the adrenalin rush's I've been having from the illusion jet! Goodnight from Vinson basecamp!

### 30TH NOVEMBER

I had a great night's sleep until I woke up in the night absolutely freezing. When I removed my velvet Joan Collins velvet eye shades, I saw that although it was light the sun had dipped behind Vinson hence the huge temperature drop. I added 3 more layers to my 4, fell back to sleep and didn't wake up until 9.30am. We got up and had a great breakfast loaded our sledges and prepared to leave for our carry to camp 1. My sledge was laden down with fuel, food and a few personal items. We roped together, Luis myself and Hamish taking up the rear, and set off up the long undulating snow slope to camp 1. All was going well until I thought Luis had fallen over. He yelled loudly at Hamish and I to back up, as unbeknownst to us he had fallen into a crevasse and I had too much slack on the rope. This meant if Luis went into the crevasse rather alarmingly, I would get pulled in also due to the slack on the rope. Luckily Luis landed on a ledge rather than falling into the crevasse's depths and managed to get himself out.

We continued up towards camp 1 and about an hour out (we had been going for 3 and a half hours at this stage) we decided to leave our loads stashed away here. It just meant that on our move up to camp 1 tomorrow we would be towing very heavy sledges for the last hour or so of the move. We buried our loads and went back to camp 1 as fast as possible. My sledge was impossible to control on the descent and capsized a couple of times..

Finally we arrived back in camp 1 and caught up with John Rost who was pacing base camp impatiently raring to go. Rob had opened 2 bottles of Merlot and was socialising as usual! He is great company and I have a great picture of him towing in his case of wine and champagne to hopefully celebrate his and Kat's impending wedding on the summit of Vinson. I had a gossip with Kat, we are all moving up to camp 1 together tomorrow which is the good news. If possible we are trying to keep our 2 groups alongside each other. Luis cooked a great pizza and I got into our tent to change into fresh clothes for the next however many days we have on the mountain. Andronico came over to see me, they were on skis going up to camp 1 today and I was most envious as they glided effortlessly past me on the way up. I'm tired now, I've got a huge blister on my ankle, my legs are aching and I've got to tow a heavy sledge load for 4 hours again tomorrow, so I'll say goodnight from Antarctica.

1st DECEMBER

We all woke up around 9.00am, this time i was hot in the night with my multitude of layers on but by early morning it had cooled down substantially by morning. We had breakfast and then took down our huge taj mahal tent and loaded up our sledges for the move up to camp 1. Andronico and co were taking a rest day and Guys group, Phil Ershlers group and ourselves were moving up. We left camp at noon ( this is one of the best things about Antarctica - the 24 hour daylight and hence the late starts) and began walking up the slope to camp 1. About 6 hours later, towing extremely heavy loads we finally arrived in camp 1. My sledge drove me mad by capsizing at least 3 times, which brought our rope team to a grinding whiplash type halt which didnt amuse Luis and Hamish. Once in camp we set about sawing ice blocks to surround our tent to protect if from any potential wind or storms. It was exhausting work and rob kept stealing my carefully sawn ice blocks for his and Kats tent! Poor Hamish had to build our Loo - everything gets carried out from Antarctica - i just hope the loo is not in my sledge on the way down! Luis has assured me that it will be on my sledge! Its now about 9.00pm at night and Luis is making dinner and we are boiling water which seems to take forever and it is so time consuming as we are all meant to be drinking 3 litres a day!

Guy and co are camped next door and we all have a big day tomorrow as we are doing a load carry to camp 3 and it looks like we will skip camp 2. Camp 2 has very little sun so we have been told that its going to be much colder than basecamp, hence the decision to go directly to camp 3. Im definatley looking forward to any further temperature reduction!

Ill just end up on my aches and pains, my blister on my heel is killing me and it is at least 2 inches in diameter, my shoulders are throbbing from carrying my pack, my hips are in agony from towing my sledge and my back is seriously sore - other than that im fine and getting ready to do an interview with Hamish before going to sleep. Hamish has accused me of sleeping so high up on top of clothes and thermorests etc that he thinks ill get vertigo.. nothing wrong with my nose being pressed to the ceiling of our tent and as far from the ice as possible!

2nd DECEMBER I woke in the middle of the night as the cold was unbelievable, i had on down booties, 2 thermal layers, hat, gloves and i was in my minus 40 sleeping bag and i was still frozen it must have been at least 35 below. I installed myself halfway down my sleeping bag and didnt move again until 11.30am when the sun was up! We are on strange hours here, we go to bed around 1.00am and wake up anywhere between 9.30am - 11.30am when its warmer. I could hardly open my eyes and when i looked in the mirror i looked like id been punched in each eye. I looked accusingly at Luis and Hamish in case they decided to beat me up in the night! I got up and had breakfast and got ready to start doing our carry up to camp 3. In order to get there we have to climb a 2,000ft headwall of snow which is crevassed near the top. Struggling under the weight of my pack we left camp at 1.30pm all roped together and in our crampons. We arrived at the headwall about an hour or so out of camp 1. It was hot from the sun, but you couldnt take your clothes off because you instantly became too cold, its an annoying temperature down here where you are somehow both cold and hot at the same time.

We made great time going up the headwall and arrived at camp 3 after about 4 and a half hours of climbing. There are a few crevasses that we had to jump over which i always hate doing, but we arrived safely at camp 3 with an icy wind blowing in our faces. I was now sporting my bank robber type face mask to protect my face from the elements and my goggles which annoyingly kept fogging up from my breath. We offloaded our packs at camp 3 and all began digging a hole to bury all our gear. We then did a quick turnaround and headed back down to camp 1. I found Andronico lying in his tent at camp 1 with the rest of his team about an hour behind him. We had a quick catch up before i headed back to our tent which is where i am now! Its about 9pm at night and sunny but of course cold!

### 3rd DECEMBER

I wasnt as cold as the previous night and as a result had a great sleep and didnt wake until noon. Today was going to be a rest day for us. Taking a heavy load up to camp 3 had taken its toll and Luis thought that it was a good idea to have a day off. We had breakfast in the tent and then i headed over to Kats tent to have a girlie gossip! Hamish, guy and Luis went to run through some technical drills with Keano on the nearby slopes. I made the rounds and said hi to all the camps to fill the time and then returned back to our tent for lunch. We plan to move to camp 3 tomorrow and try for the summit on sunday all being well, there is supposed to be a depression on Monday 6th december so there could be a small window for us. I have to say it did seem too good to be true! Its so hard to tell with the weather as the reports from the teams on the headwall today say that it is very windy up there. Im getting a bit anxious and ideally would like to try and reach the summit prior to Monday. We are waiting for a report from Andronicos team tomorrow morning as they are receiving weather reports from the Chilean army base at Patriot Hills. Its so stressful for me waiting out the weather as i really really need to reach the summit of Vinson in order to be able to stand a chance to complete the seven summits within a year. Vinson is too expensive to try and go back twice and even if i could, its fully booked for the rest of the season! Pressure or what!! Thats it from camp 1 today!

### 4TH DECEMBER

I was woken up by Luis yelling that today was a "no go" day due to high winds coming off the headwall. There was no sun and it was really cold. We had breakfast and Ernesto came over to say that the revised weather forecast from the Chilean base at Patriot Hills indicated bad weather until Monday with it clearing up on Tuesday. They also forecast 60km winds in our camp tonight so everyone except us had spent the afternoon building bigger snow walls around their tents. I spent the afternoon with my Chilean team in their camp, talking about our Everest climb, i cant believe that it was 6 months since coming out of Nepal. Gabriella will be the first Chilean woman to climb Vinson if she makes the summit this trip. The rest of the day i spent bugging Hamish and Luis making them pose for my dispatch photos about 10 times in a row. I wanted to see if i could push Luis to the edge of his patience - the kind of thing i like to do when im bored!! Ive left my book at basecamp due to weight restrictions so i could have been mildly irritating today! Lets hope for Luis and Hamish's sake we get a break in the weather soon! The wind is blowing



onimously off the side of the mountain and we are in a semi white out here at camp 1. Im about to get ready for bed and its about 9.30pm and i refuse to have hamish film me asleep again! He supposedly captured me snoring on film which i really dont believe! When Hamish filmed Luis snoring, i was awake and fully laughing with Hamish, only to be caught sleeping and supposedly snoring on camera 40 minutes later by hamish. Hope the weather is good tomorrow!

#### 5th DECEMBER

We didnt hear one puff of wind in the night, however the weather this morning is pretty socked in and there are still strong winds coming off the headwall. Today was yet another rest day which is so frustrating - you feel so near and yet so far. I had breakfast and then went with Kat to build a bigger snow wall around our loo to keep prying eyes out! Iv already had too many pictures taken of my rear so i think this has to be stopped! I tried to make a few phone calls from the sat phone but the signal was really annoying and kept cutting me off every 3 minutes. I hung out with the chilenos until lunch and in the afternoon i was in Rob and Kats tent running through their wedding vows with them. Iv now returned to bug Luis and Hamish in my tent. I think tomorrow the weather is still meant to be bad, but if it continues to be bad on tuesday i think im going to start freaking out! Guy has gone back down to basecamp to pick up some more supplies and fuel. He went down on skis so he should be back quite soon. Its pretty boring just waiting out the weather - lets see what tomorrow holds!

#### 6TH DECEMBER

I woke up at 11.00am and was very excited to see the sun streaming in through our tent. My excitement was shortlived as Luis said he wasnt comfortable with the wind coming off the headwall. Andronico came over to tell me that they were going to move up to camp 3 today. Our group was definately staying here. I got more anxious when i saw Verns group heading up to camp 3 too. I went over to chat to Phil Ershler who was also keeping his group down. " Do we have to go up today" he asked me.. "No" i said reluctantly. "exactly, we have time" he said. That offered me some comfort and i headed back to our camp to hang out. At around 4.00pm the ALE group made the extraordinary decision to move up to camp 3 too... I thought it was a bit strange to go up so much later in the day, but each to their own. Hamish got creative and built a huge AC sign in the snow outside our camp. He got cross with me when i tried to hijack the C sign so that it was just an A for annabelle sign left! We had pizza for lunch and then i spent the afternoon chatting with Kat before filming my diary with Hamish. Its 6.30pm and the ALE group have just walked back into camp 1 as the conditions on the headwall were really bad. It was at this point i was glad that Guy and Luis had made the decision to stay down. Lets hope for the millionth time the weather is better tomorrow. Ive scrounged some more wet wipes as i was down to my last 3. Its quite a skill to scrounge wetwipes with the weight restrictions we have inflicted on us up here!! Over and out yet again from camp 1.

#### 7TH DECEMBER

I woke up at 11.00am as per usual in my routine here at camp 1. However, today Luis gave us the thumbs up to move up to camp 3. We packed the things that were to remain at camp 1 and with extremely heavy packs we tramped out of camp at around 12.30pm. We did some filming en route prior to reaching the headwall and then we all focused on getting up the 2,000ft snow wall that takes us to the ridge leading up to camp 3. We finally arrived at camp 3 in just under 5 hours and i was seriously hating my pack at this point. As soon as we arrived in camp i saw Andronicos group and Verns group whom i was delighted to see had taken a rest day after getting a battering from the high winds on the headwall yesterday. We then started to build a snow wall around our tent which is arduous work when you have carried a heavy pack 3,000 ft upwards for 5 hours. Im now sitting in my tent sending my dispatch and writing emails. Its amazing the technology that enables us to do that in the middle of Antarctica. Im hoping that we will be able to go for the summit tomorrow. Fingers crossed.

#### 8TH DECEMBER - SUMMIT DAY

I was woken at 9.30am by the sounds of boots and crampons scrunching on the ice outside our tent. It seemed like everyone was going for the summit today. We had breakfast and got ready to go. I was desperate to get going and must have been annoying Luis like mad. We finally left camp at 10.45am, apart from Guys group everyone else was ahead of us which being competitive by nature i hated! We started up the long approach to Vinson Massifs summit. Summit day is very long - 3 underlating valleys we need to navigate prior to arriving at the base of the summit ridge. We got into a rhythm Luis first, me in the middle and Hamish on the back of the rope. We had to go over a few crevasses not too far out of camp, which i always hate going over. I always do this huge leap over the crevasse which inevitably pulls Hamish flying forward much to his annoyance. Guys group, the wedding party were behind us and moving slowly. We caught Phils group after a few hours and then soon caught up with Ernesto and Gabby from my chilean group. Andronico had gone ahead solo, it feels strange not climbing with him after spending so much time with him on Everest and for all our training. As we approached the summit ridge it was really windy and cold, we all had frost in our hair and resembled yettis at this stage. I changed into my minus 40 down suit, rabbit hat and put in two pairs of handwarmers. Once all done, we set off again and of course within minutes the wind had died down and i started to really overheat! I was wanting to go as fast as possible and kept braking our rhythm, i was just so desperate to get to the summit. I passed Andronico who was already on his descent and gave him a hug before continuing upwards. We stopped briefly at the top of the ridge so Hamish could unclip and start to film our approaching the summit. The summit was by now within eye reach and i was chomping at the bit to get there. I could feel the tears welling up as we walked the narrow ridge which led to the summit. There was breathtaking views either side and we had idyllic weather conditions. In no time i was there and hugging Luis and Hamish. I burst into tears which is becoming more and more regular when i arrive on a summit, but this was such an important mountain in terms of my goal and i was so elated to be there. We stayed on the summit about an hour, filming, getting some good photos for my sponsors and congratulating the other teams. Guys group were a couple of hours behind us but still

heading upwards which was good news. We then started heading down as fast as possible. We met the others on the ridge and hugged them all. We wished Kat and Rob all the best for their wedding vows. It was a big moment for John Rost as this was the last climb of his seven summit quest. Hamish was in the front of our rope chain and with his long stride i was running to keep up with him and we started cranking it down the mountain. We were passing a couple of groups when i tripped up over my ice axe and literally did a face plant.. most uncool. My blisters were now absolutely killing me - i think the adrenalin rush of getting to the summit keeps the pain at bay, but now my heels were throbbing uncontrollably. We arrived back at camp 3 at around 8pm - 10 hours round trip. I hung out with Andronico for a while before crawling into my tent to rest and send a dispatch. I was sooo happy to have made the summit and soon fell into an exhausted slumber.

## 9th DECEMBER

I was woken again by boots and crampons crunching on the ice and as i poked my nose out of our tent i saw Phil's group starting to leave camp 3 already. We got up and started packing up all our gear, our rucksacks were going to be even heavier as we had two loads worth to carry down to camp 1 and then onto basecamp. Hamish and i wanted to put a "for sale" sign on our taj mahal tent but needless to say Luis vetoed that idea. I have never seen Luis in such a bad mood as when we made the terrible discovery that we had a phantom sprayer in our poo bag. To make matters even worse Luis lost a bet with Hamish about whom would carry the poo bag down the mountain and in losing the bet it was decided that it would go ontop of his already very heavy pack. I was busying myself trying to find the culprit and was accusing everyone in Guys group of using our bag. This is what happens when you spend 10 days in the mountains!

I was in a foul mood coming down the headwall my pack was so unbelievably heavy and my hip, back and shoulders were in such pain. With a sulky face we finally arrived back at camp 1 whereby we could at least redistribute the weight of our packs ( not get rid of it i hasten to add!) by putting them in our sledge. We then got news that we would be flown from basecamp to Patriot Hills tonight at 10.00pm so we quickly got the sledges ready and started back down to basecamp. I didnt know why at this stage but i was put to the back of our sledge line instead of my usual place in the middle. It didnt take too long for me to figure out why i was at the back... after my sledge had rammed into my heels 15 times as we descended, bursting my blisters as it hit me hard on the back of my ankles. I then got tripped up completely and Hamish oblivious to my plight kept motoring down the hill and in doing so dragged me along the snow tangled up in the ropes. I finally lost it especially after spotting Vern at the back of his rope team. I switched places with Hamish and resumed my role in the middle of the rope and i listened to Luis as he told me to keep the rope taut so as not to bang his sledge into his heels. With an evil glint in my eye and my heels still throbbing i took on board his instructions. Just outside of basecamp somehow my rope developed some slack and i saw Luis jumping a foot into the air as his sledge rammed him hard on his heels! Oh im so sorry Luis i muttered insincerely!! Finally we were back at basecamp and Rob Cracked open wine, champagne and beer and we began to celebrate their wedding in style. It was so cool hanging out at basecamp eating and drinking whilst enjoying some of the most stunning scenery on earth. The twin

otters arrived and Phils group went on the first plane and Andronicos and Verns group went on the second plane. I watched the planes take off and i have to say i was worried about Andronicos plane that seemed to take ages to gain any elevation. It just seemed a little overloaded but finally they started to gain altitude and dissapear over the horizon. Our plane came 2 hours later with the same canadian pilots who flew us into basecamp flying it, we all clambered eagerly on board, said goodbye to Neil and Heather whom were staying at basecamp until january and soon we were lifting off the snow and headed to Patriot Hills. This flight i was sitting next to John Rost and only had to grab on a couple of times, im such a nervous flier that inevitably i always end up clinging to someone. We landed at Patriot Hills and i was met off the plane and told to join Andronico and Gabby at the ALE tent where they had provided dinner. Taking Kat and Rob with me we went over and joined them and hung out there for a couple of hours whilst waiting for the illusion jet to land. The winds were picking up now and it was fifty fifty whether the plane would be able to land at Patriot or not, it was expected to arrive at 3.00am and we were supposed to leave at 5.00am. Finally i spied it in the distance and ran out of the tent frantically waiving my arms in the air in the vague hope that they would see us and try really hard to land! Luck was on our side and soon that beast of a plane was touching down on the ice. I was so excited about being able to leave!!

At 5.00am we were ready to board the plane. We walked to the plane in an icy wind and i watched with horror as two landrover defenders were parked in the middle of our plane. How heavy was our plane going to be i thought to myself as i saw the two landrovers, 40 peoples worth of expedition equipment, barrels and barrels of used toilet waste etc all being loaded onto the plane. I scrambled on through the back of the plane and sat with Andronico and Gabby. Eventually we were ready to go - short of the tents at Patriot Hills, i felt like we had everything conceivably possible on board. The take off was so scarey, we finally took off and about 20 minutes after take off as we were bouncing around, i saw the steward ( if you can call him that) looking visibly terrified. I looked out of the window, i was sitting next to the one small window on the plane and to my horror i saw that we were still only about 50 feet off the ground. I lost it and started sobbing into Andronicos shoulder, absalutely convinced that this was it. I couldnt believe we were still so low after being in the air 20 minutes! Finally we started to gain altitude but i was a nervous, tired wreck. After about 5 hours of trying to sleep we started our descent into Punta Arenas and before i knew it we were on the ground, off the snow and ice at last! We all headed back to our hotel and we were all exhausted having been awake the whole night, I arranged for Luis, Hamish and myself to fly to Santiago the next day and then onto Mendoza to get ready to start our next climb Aconcagua. We had a great team farewell dinner last night and im now sitting on the plane as we fly back to Santiago. I cannot actually believe im about to start another climb on Monday ( its now saturday) Im aching in every bone, i have four huge blisters on my feet and ive lost weight which i dont like to do. The plan is to ride into Plaza Argentinas on the mules to save some time, i guess we can look forward to a different stiffness after 2 days in the saddle, i just hope my mule is more obedient than my sledge that i was towing on Vinson! Vinson was a wonderful trip for me, Kat and Rob Fellows were such great company, we always had a laugh even when we were waiting anxiously for the weather. JR and Andy were great to have around and it was so fun to beat John at backgammon, the fact that we set the board up completely wrong was inconsequential to my defeat!! Hamish is so fun to have around

and always makes me laugh and Luis and Guy were fantastic team leaders. Im so happy to have reached the summit of Vinson..... next goal Aconcagua.