

## Sunday 26th June 1993: Sent to Mum

I've now settled down on the camp. The camp is a big improvement on the other camps I've been on - the food is better, the living accommodation is better (I am in a 2 person cabin with Jimmy, an English lad who is the baker) & the wash/toilet facilities are OK. I will give you a brief idea of what I've been doing so far.

(Wed 23rd) Flew over on a 747 & had a window seat, I was terrified looking out during take-off. Arrived at JFK at 3pm & was driven to Columbia University and given a room. In the evening, myself and five others decided to have a good look at Manhattan. We started walking down Broadway (temperature was still in the 70s at 7pm) & stopped at a diner where I had a Pizzaburger. We then took a bus to Times Square - it wasn't very impressive. So we found 5th Avenue & walked to the Empire State Building. We went on an elevator to the observation deck on the 102nd floor in about 60 seconds. Cost was only \$3.25. From there was a fantastic view of all of Manhattan and the other boroughs - I hope the photos come out. Arrive back at C.U. at midnight after something like a 22 hour day - shattered.

(Thu 24th) Breakfast at C.U. was scrambled eggs, bacon, waffles & bagels. Driven to the camp at about 1:30pm, arrived at 3:30pm & the weather was blisteringly hot - in the 90s. Shown to our cabins (ours is about 14' x 9' - it's very dirty at the moment, but has good potential. Dinner at 6:30pm was meatballs, pasta & salad bar. I played tennis until 8:30pm when we had a barbecue, where all of the staff met - there are Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, Belaurussians, Dutch, Spanish & of course English & Americans. We are all starting to get to know each other & they all seem a good bunch - so things look good.

(Fri 25th) Straight to work. Spent all morning driving around camp delivering luggage & running errands in a Pontiac Parisenne Station Wagon (estate) which has a six litre engine. Lunch was pizza & it was excellent - I had 3 huge slices. In the afternoon I had my first drive off camp when I had to take our cook to Rhinecliff train station, a journey of about 20 miles. I had no problems at and & actually quite enjoyed it. Dinner at 6:30pm was chicken wings - not very good. After dinner I did some more driving & thought I had finished at 7:30pm. At 8:30pm, Irwin - the camp director (we get along really well) came and asked me to do another job. I had to take 3 of his friends (real country hicks) to their homes. The journey was a maze of un-named country lanes & I thought that I'd never be able to find my way back. One of the blokes was so fat, I'd say 25 stone, that when we arrived he couldn't get out of the car so one of his friends had to pull him out! I eventually got back to camp at 10pm - a long day driving.

(Sat 26th) Breakfast was pancakes & cereal - I am presently refusing to eat any pancakes or waffles! Again, I was driving all day. Dinner was roast beef, mashed potatoes & peas and it was superb. In the evening I played football & tennis with Levvi (Hungary), Lazo (Slovak), Jacob (Czech) & Darrius (Pole). At night there was a thunderstorm & it has really cleared the air

So, I am really enjoying myself & don't anticipate any problems at the camp. The American staff are really obnoxious, but luckily I don't have much to do with them. Tomorrow is going to be a very busy day because all of the kids will be arriving, 350 of them. Everything about this camp is better than I expected, so don't worry about me. Love, David

## Wednesday 7th July 1993: Sent to Mum

Firstly, I hope Sue received her birthday card - I mailed it on July 1st. The weather here is murder: daily temps are 95/98F & lowest night temps are 75F. The radio station reports that because of the very high humidity, the 'effective' air temperature is 114F. I've been here 15 days now & still haven't taken a day off, but on Tuesday (13th) myself and 4 others will rent a car and got to Boston. I now have the measure of my job & it is really quite simple work but I must always be available between 8am & 6pm, since being here I have driven 7 different vehicles of all shapes & sizes & I am responsible for the basic weekly servicing of all of them. Every day I pick up a range of newspapers for the camp so I am well informed of what's happening in the world. Nearly every afternoon I am able to go to the waterfront for about 1 hour to swim & sunbathe - I am black already. Every evening I play either tennis or volleyball or football. I take about six showers every day, it is very convenient! Today I had a haircut in barbers that was reminiscent of those 30's gangster films. The time I go I will have about 5 days of beard growth & will have a 'cut-throat blade' shave. I have made loads of friends on camp, mainly with the east European people. I speak a lot to a Polish guy: Daryius Goralewicz who works on maintenance and has very good English. In Poland he has a master's degree in political science & it is obvious that he is very intelligent & interesting to talk with - dad would love it. I'm going off now to take another shower - just writing this is making me sweat, it is that humid.

## Monday 12th July 1993: Received from Mum

Dear David,

Well lad, you have certainly cracked it. "First Class Degree with Honours". We are all over the moon about it. Dad and me are so proud of you. Susan, Andrew, Mr. & Mrs. Woch as well as the neighbours send you their congratulations.

I was going to ring Sam on 8 July but he beat me to it. I asked him what he had got but he said not as high as you. Maybe he got a 'B'. I didn't want to ask him more about his results.

We haven't received confirmation from Stafford yet, nor has it been published in The Times. I wonder if they publish it after the graduation awards.

We have sold your bike for £50 - Andrew's friend had it for his son. The lock is still on. Do you know the combination to undo it? If not, the lad will have to cut it off and buy another one. Andrew said he thought you had forgotten the combination numbers.

You have had some papers from Boston University - no letter, just a Graduate Programs and Financial Aid Information Sheet. We have had no more mail for you.

We have sorted out the holidays for the kids. I am picking them up at Victoria on 26 July. I am hoping they will stay with us for ten days. They have to be back by the 7 August for a barbecue. Your bed will be very well aired!

Coco and his Mum and Dad have moved at last. Maybe we can get rid of the glass.

I have no more news at the moment. Look after yourself.

Love, Mum and Dad

## Monday 19th July 1993: Received from Mum

Dear David,

Well, you've done it again! You have been awarded the Prize for outstanding Project Work and £100 to go with it. Dad and me and Andrew are over the moon. Well done!

I rang up Staffs. Univ. and managed to get tickets for the Graduation Ceremony. It was a very colourful site. One half of the hall was for visitors and the other for the graduates. Everyone in their gowns and mortar boards. Your class were in the first two rows as they came on the stage first for the awards. Apparently the scroll they gave is only a congratulations, the actual degree is sent through the post. They came up on the stage - four at a time, names called out, handshake and handing over the scroll, then everyone claps. There were a crowd of dignitaries on the stage - Doctors, Professors, Mayor & Mayoress of Stafford and the Lord Mayor of S-O-T. At the beginning of the ceremony we had to stand and a special fanfare was played as they walked down the aisle to the stage. Very Hollywoodish! In the afternoon we went over to Staffs. Univ. for the reception and buffet - very good. I was just having a cup of coffee when I was asked if I was your Mum and I would like to accept the check for £100 from the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. I felt very proud indeed - it made my day. So now you really have something to be proud of. Maybe have a few more beers. You deserve it for the hard work you have put in.

Your camp staff sound like a lot of slave drivers. Maybe they will pay you overtime and then maybe they won't! Sounds as though you will have pasta coming out of your ears. Still this type of food is maybe better for you than a good juicy steak! We had steak and kidney pie last Sunday - can you remember what it tasted like?

Andrew still hasn't painted his kitchen yet - we have decided on a colour - a little bit further. I think he'll make it before you get home. Maybe he is actually waiting till you get home - never know. Andrew doesn't like to be rushed.

Noted what you said about the combination lock - maybe by now the lad has chopped it off and slung it.

I have got myself all geared up for the mass attack on Monday, 26 July - when I fetch the kids. I will move your box of Univ. letters and anything they could possibly mess up - never know when they are in the bedroom and too quietly!

We are entertaining four Poles this evening, well we have had three for tea, Val has just come in, so I thought I'd sneak upstairs and type this letter.

Oh by the way we picked up your file with all the classwork in it. We managed to obtain four programmes with your name on. It still isn't in the Times yet but who cares! (The programme is the one with everyone's name on and the order in which they are read out.)

I am enclosing a photostat of the letter from I.Mech.Engrs.

O.K. David, that's my news.

By the way I 'phoned you on that special number you gave me on 8 July. Haven't you tried it - maybe I made a 'cock-up'.

By for now, All our love. Mum & Dad

## Sunday 1st August 1993: Sent to Mum

I received your letter just a couple of days ago with the news of the prize from IMechE. It's going to be really helpful when applying for scholarship at a USA university. I'm glad that you went to the ceremony, I think that I'd have been embarrassed by all that Hollywood stuff. Still, when I get back I can have my 'graduation photo' taken with my real FIRST CLASS certificate - plus a mega sun tan!

Camp life is still very good, I've now only got 19 days to go 'till the end of camp. The day trip to Washington doesn't look like coming off but next week I'm off to Hyde Park which is where the FDR mansion & library is which will be something of a substitute. I went shopping 'proper' for the first time last week & I spent \$150 - it felt great, I've got some really good gear.

The daytime temperatures have now dropped to about 85F, but the humidity is up which means that it's no more comfortable. I'm writing this letter after a 12 hour day so I'm feeling a little tired & I feel my inspiration waning. Tuesday evening there will be a soccer match between Scatico & the local rival camp, Camp Pontiac & I'm playing. The stories go that every year there is some serious aggro between the camps so it should be interesting. Today I bought the Sunday New York Times & it's about three times as thick as our own Sunday Times - I think it will take all of the week to read - still it's nice to hear about all of John Major's problems!

Not much more to say except to give the girls another kiss from me.

Love, David

## Friday 5th August 1993: Sent to Mum

Well, just two more weeks to go until the end of camp, for most of the staff it can't come soon enough, but I'm still enjoying camp life. I've been doing some extra shopping & have mainly bought books, I don't fancy lumbering them around after camp so I think I will mail them over.

On Tuesday I'm renting a car & 4 of us will be going to Washington DC, we're all hoping for a sunny day because it's been quite dull recently.

It has seemed strange having a week go by & getting no news of some success at the university - what's happened?

I've spoken to many people here & they seem to think that the universities which I will be applying to are all very good. Irwin, the director, has already asked me if I would like to return next year. I told him thanks, but no thanks, maybe the year after.

Today was a carnival day at the camp, with dozens of small sideshows & stalls, it was really well done & I quite enjoyed it.

The food at camp is getting really bland, I'm tired of pasta & chicken all the time. I try to schedule my trips out of camp in such a way that I miss lunch or dinner & have to buy something, then Irwin reimburses me, crafty eh!

I've still not picked up any viruses or rashes, etc. like most of the other staff have. I'm glad because medication here is an unbelievable price. Every day I have to go to the pharmacy to pick up simple drugs & very rarely do they cost any less than \$40.

I've still received no Stoke fixtures from Andrew & I'm getting quite anxious!

I hope you enjoyed the kids, pity I've got the camera so you couldn't take any photos, never mind.

That's all for now. Love, David

## Saturday 6th August 1993: Received from Mum

Dear David,

Well all the excitement has now died down. The kids behaved very well indeed. We went to about four different parks and the museum at the Brampton. They loved that, especially the doll's display. I bought them cut out Victorian dolls and a 'Roman' ring. The weather was quite good the first week but the second week when we proposed going to Rhyl turned out not so good. We didn't tell them we were going to the seaside so they weren't disappointed. They seemed to be happy going on all the swings and going to cafes for their dinners. I never once went to MacDonalds. I made my own milk shakes in the liquidiser. Only Laura drank those - Emma just didn't like anything she hadn't had before. I think she existed on chips and cheese sandwiches as well as cakes and biscuits and crisps. I put them on the scales - Laura was 5 stones and Emma was 4 stones 3 lbs. (Sorry it was the other way around).

Susan says she will have to put them on a diet. The house is very quiet now that they have gone. I can have a little doze now after meals!

You mention the new gear you have bought. Are you slinging out all the old stuff and replacing it with the new? Hope it goes in your bags O.K.

Susan thought you were returning to Heathrow. I think she was a little disappointed. I said when you are coming home you can't get there quick enough.

Hope you didn't get beaten up after your soccer match. It will feel very homely - all the aggro!

Not a lot has happened around here - Coco has gone but has been replaced by two dogs. At least they haven't got into our garden - yet!

We have had very little mail for you. Just junk mainly. You seemed to get such a lot when you were at home.

Andrew still hasn't painted his kitchen. I said he must be waiting for you til you get home. Dad fixed him some new taps in the kitchen, looks very smart indeed.

I bet you are crossing the days off on the calendar - Canada here I come! You will be driving up there with your eyes shut - now that you have driven so much in the past few weeks.

David, I don't seem to have any more news. Not a lot has happened except for the kids. We are now awaiting your arrival home.

I will say goodbye.

All our love, Mum and Dad

## Saturday 13th August 1993: Sent to Mum

Hi again. Well only another six days to go. The last week dragged on a lot but at least we managed to do some work on our car which we have decided to call "Greased Lightning". On Monday we are going to the mall in Scranton and are going to buy ourselves a four-man tent which they sell for \$50, only \$12.50 each.

We've now work on our travel plan and it sounds great. First, we leave Friday at 11:00 & I have a ten hour drive to Virginia Beach where we will spend a day or two, then a short drive to Myrtle Beach in North Carolina for another day, then onto: Atlanta, Birmingham:Alabama, New Orleans, then we should have a week to spend driving along the south coast to Tallahassee where one of the Dutch lads leaves us on the seventh of September. We will drive down to Miami and catch an overnight ferry to the Bahamas which costs \$45 and spend a week there. We will take our tent there so accommodation won't cost us much money. We hope to sail back to Miami on or around the 16th and visit some places on the east coast of Florida, but a day at Cape Canaveral & 2 days at Disneyworld are a must. Our final journey will be to Washington DC where we will unload our car back onto the cook. I will then get a Greyhound to JFK and I have received my return flight info, it is as follows: leave JFK at 22:00 hours on a Virgin Atlantic Airways plane to Gatwick so I should arrive back at bout 11am Wednesday morning English time. Well, not much more to say except we are all as eager as hell to get out of this place which we all call 'Tenko'. Hopefully my next letter will be coming from Virginia Beach.

See ya soon, David

## Thursday 19th August 1993: Received from Mum

Dear David,

Back once more - this will be my last letter to you.

We received just one more letter from the University - quote:

"Dear David, The achievement of a First Class Honours Degree is a considerable one by any standards. You have brought credit upon yourself and upon the University by reaching such a high standard. Deliberately, our Award Ceremony brochures do not distinguish honours classifications. These are occasions for all to celebrate. But your success should be specially recognised and thus I send you my particular congratulations and my special good wishes for career success and personal happiness. Yours sincerely, Keith Thompson - Vice Chancellor"

Dad and me were very chuffed - I hope you are too.

We borrowed a camera from Val Tyminski during the kid's visit so we have some very good photos of them.

Some football news - Stoke played Millwall at home. The result was Millwall 2 and Stoke 1, only trouble was that Millwall scored all three goals. If you are interested in Div. 2, Vale played away at Burnley and lost 2-1. Not a very good start to the season.

Andrew said he couldn't get any Stoke fixtures - but you know Andrew! You can catch up on these when you arrive home.

I didn't inform Spike or Fred of your degree - it will seem better coming from you personally.

A bit of home news - there was a bomb hoax in Newcastle on Saturday (yesterday). Apparently someone rang the police and said there was a bomb planted in Wilkinsons. Course the whole of the Ironmarket was blocked off. But you couldn't believe that the people all stood around the barriers - I think they were waiting for the big bang. The I.R.A blew up six large stores in Bournemouth and said there was a bomb under the pier - the police didn't find anything under there though.

My last little news is that I am actually buying the paint for Andrew's kitchen tomorrow. If it gets put on the wall, well that is another matter entirely.

Well David, when I receive your next letter you will be a free man on vacation. Waiting to hear from you.

All our best love, Mum and Dad

## Monday 28th August 1993: Sent to Mum

Well I said in my last letter that I'd write to you from Virginia Beach & that's what I'm doing now. As I'm writing now it's 8 o'clock in the evening, sitting on a grassy field which is just 40 yards from the ocean, with the sea breeze blowing in, listening to a band play and drinking a couple of beers with the lads. I think this is what they call the American Lifestyle!

Anyway, we left camp as planned at about 12:00 on Friday morn & drove straight down to the southern tip of the Delaware / Maryland island thingy? At about 1am we crashed out on the beach and slept there with mosquitoes buzzing in our ears. The car was bad the in the morning and we limped over a 14 mile bridge connecting the island to the mainland and arrived at the beach Sat. morn. We've spent three days here lying around the beach here & I'm really, really dark already! Got the car fixed, it needed new carburettor, cost us 140 bucks, \$35 each, no problem, it now runs absolutely beautifully. Weather has been incredible, in the high 90's each day & the sea has great waves & it's just so enjoyable here, a real boost after the isolation of camp.

Tonight, we're going down to Myrtle Beach, about a four hour drive, nothing! We're going to stay on a camp site there that's got swimming pools, games room, TV, hot / cold showers, all for 18 bucks a night. I'll give you more news as it happens.

I'll call you on Sat or Sun next week at about 2200 or 2300 here, about 3 or 4am in England, it's much less hassle for me, hope you don't mind. Be sure to have all of Stoke's results with you.

Love, David

## Tuesday 5th September 1993: Sent to Mum

Hi again. Well, as you now know, I am in Florida and it's HOT! HOT! HOT! Since we left Virginia Beach on Aug. 28th it's been a whistle stop tour of the east coast.

On the 29th we arrived in, & promptly left Myrtle Beach: it was BORING! The next day we drove down to a place called Island of Palms & it was beautiful, and hot. It was just like being on the Bahamas because the water was clear and blue and the beaches were just miles of golden sand. 30th & 31st we stayed in Edisto, South Carolina and stayed in a really dirty campsite and got bitten to death by the mosquitoes. We took off & stayed in Savannah, Georgia for the night of Friday 1st September & saw the town proper on Saturday 2nd. It was really old fashioned and in the past it was the centre for the plantation business, but it was also a little uninteresting.

Sunday 3rd we arrived in Jacksonville, Florida and the weather has been great since. Monday night we stayed in a motel for the first time, \$28 for 4 people (2 double beds) - a colour TV, shower, it was heaven!!!

Anyway, we'll be here until Friday morning so I won't write again until I've seen Disneyworld, hopefully Sat, Sun & Mon.

Love, David

## Friday 15th September 1993: Sent to Mum

Well, we spit with one of the Dutch guys last week & now it's me doing all of the driving. Right now I'm just lying in bed in a motel, resting after the incredible amounts of driving that I've done. On Monday (11th) we went to the EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Centre of Tomorrow) at Disneyworld & it was really quite disappointing.

After seeing that I drove up to Jacksonville again, via Daytona, only a 160 mile journey. We stayed at Jax for a day, went to the beach & then the mal, etc. and stayed the night again in a motel.

Wednesday morning I set off from Jax, Fla and drove through Georgia, South Carolina and to Fayetteville in North Carolina, a 450 mile journey all by myself. We slept in the car Wednesday night then Thursday I drove another 300 miles to Virginia Beach, and that's where I am now.

I am starting to get a little homesick now, but not as bad as the other lads, and it's a great source of amusement for me just to listen to them moaning & whining about home.

Nothing more to say for now. Love, David