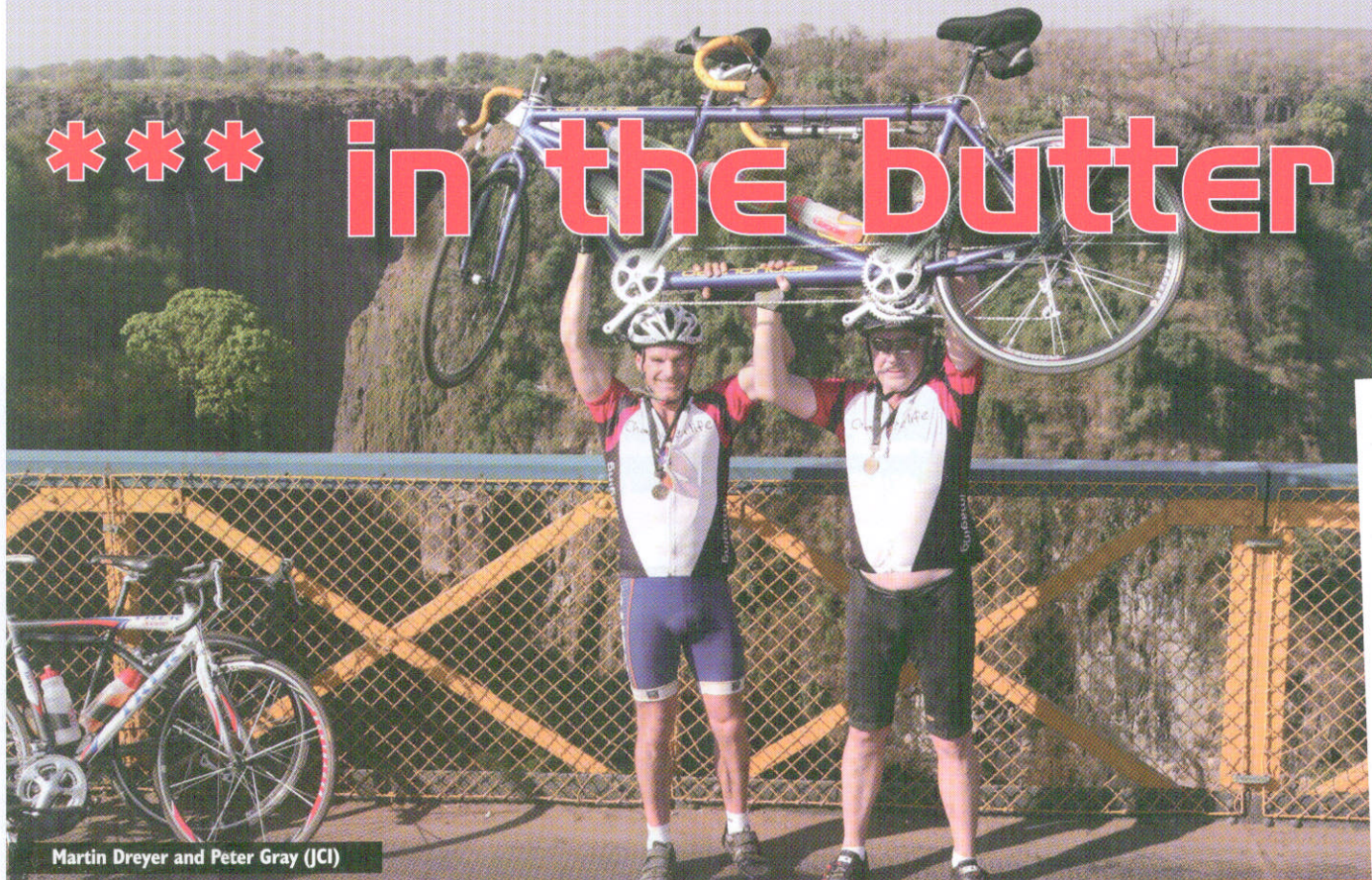


*** in the butter



Martin Dreyer and Peter Gray (JCI)

at the Computershare Change-A-Life Cycle

Computershare is an international company with a strong culture of supporting charity initiatives, mainly in terms of fighting poverty, but about a year ago Computershare manager, Mike Thomson was brutally murdered in his home and this presented the South African office with a unique challenge. In an effort to cope with their grief and shock, his colleagues set up the Mike Thomson Trust, mainly to provide funding for crime prevention measures and to support victims of violent crimes. The Computershare Change-A-Life Cycle saw about 80 top corporate executives take to the road on their bikes in an effort to raise funds for this Trust. They covered 450km, travelling through Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia. One of the celebrity participants at the event was multiple Duzi canoe marathon winner, Martin Dreyer. Here is his account of the journey:

Not ever do you get to cycle 430km across four African countries in three days, all on a red carpet – figuratively speaking. The who's who of executives, directors etc... were part of the touring party, and not even wives were allowed to tag along. I cracked the nod as the Master of Ceremonies, and Gerald de Kock actually auctioned me off when the event was launched at the JSE; stating that the back seat of my tandem was available for a free ride to the highest bidder. Peter Gray, CEO of JCI, claimed it.

If you want to understand this remarkable tour, you need to picture this. I was sitting at the table of the scalliwags, and Ursula came over to see what the commotion was, as Adrian had just danced naked around the bonfire on the bank of the mighty Zambezi.

She introduced herself, "...I am the Tour Director". Scatter exclaimed, "thank goodness you didn't say Race Director, else we would be on the first plane outta here!" There you have it: the blue print for the success of this remarkable event. It was a tour not a race. This encouraged perfect synergy, where the cyclists in each of the four mini pelotons would work for the better of the group.

DAY 1 – VIC FALLS TO MOWANA LODGE, 88KM

Spirits were high when we took off from Vic Falls. Andrew McLean was our captain, and he had us neatly arranged two-up, to maximise the slipstream without taking over the entire road. Peter and I were instructed to help pace the 'Advanced' group. We were assured it was because we were capable, and riding a tandem. In canoeing I would

never allow myself to be bullied into pulling, but this road cycling thing is new to me. Having reached the 10km mark, my heart rate was SMSing my brain that if we stayed at the front, the beginner group would pass us before the end of the day's ride. So from then on we went and claimed our position at the back... What an energy saver, now at least we could talk to each other.

Before we knew it, the Computershare banners were visible far ahead, flapping gently in the tailwind signalling the tea break – at 42km. There was dried mango, biltong, pasta, rolls, cold meats and sweets. I heard someone mumbling: "If it carries on like this I'm going to put on weight". That was only tea! Over the longer distances that were to follow, Wilderness Safaris would add brunch and lunch to the itinerary. With all the talk you hear about how Zim is at rock bottom, we did not know what to expect, but the



roads were in excellent condition. Admittedly we only saw three vehicles on the road that day, and one of them was our 'mechanical support' vehicle. Each of the four groups had a Toyota double cab tailing them with spares and know-how the entire way.

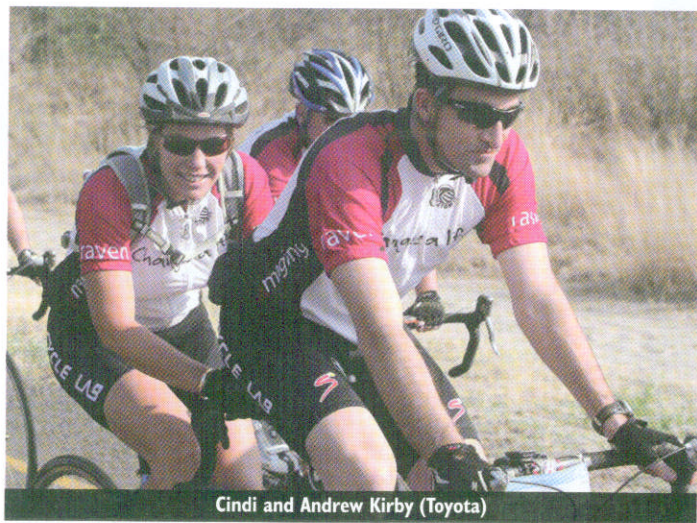
Eight kilometres before arriving at our destination – Morena Safari Lodge – we crossed into Botswana. Instead of getting my tent number like you do in the famous bike races like Sani2C and the Cape Epic, I was handed the key to a luxury room, with air conditioning. It was only 10.30a.m. Half an hour later I had a massage, lunch, an afternoon siesta and then at three, an open vehicle game drive in the Chobe Nature Reserve. The river plains were swarming with wildlife and we saw lion, hyena, masses of elephant and hippo. Rather more exciting was the African Wildcat, which is rarely seen. Dinner was an extravagant affair, celebrating the Tour Director's birthday. What an amazing day. So this is how the other half live...

DAY 2 – MOWANA LODGE TO PROTEA ZAMBEZI RIVER LODGE, 129KM

A longer day meant an earlier start. Peter and I didn't exactly hold back at the delicious buffet-style breakfast. The beginner's group left first at 6a.m. Peter and I strategically decided to start in the Intermediate group, which would give us a 10-minute head-start on the Advanced group. Ian, our new team captain, (commonly addressed as 'General') ran the group with robot-like precision. "If you go to the front, because you are on a tandem, make sure your rear wheel is level with the single bike's rear wheel next to you, else you will upset the two-two formation down the line." Sorry I didn't do calculus at school, could you repeat that?

When Andrew and Ali McLean (riding tandem) came cruising past leading the Advanced group, we jumped ship. For a few seconds I felt bad about leaving our new friends, who had so warmly welcomed us into their happy military family. But as soon as I had sniveled my way to the back of the pack, we felt great. This group was home. For quite a while we rode in fear of being dropped, as I warned Peter that the group behind would surely spit on us for our betrayal.

The highlight of the day was the 20km loop through the Chobe Nature Reserve. We saw roan antelope, giraffe, zebra and numerous elephant. The elephant saved the day for us... At one stage we found ourselves on a climb, alongside the tandem of Andrew and



Cindi and Andrew Kirby (Toyota)



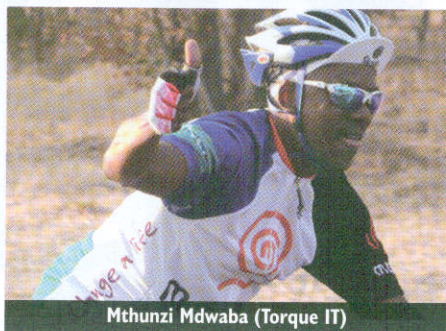
Cindi Kirby, getting dropped from the bunch. If it weren't for the herd of elephant in the road up ahead which made the pack sit up, we would have been fodder for the General!

We crossed the border into Namibia and headed north up the Caprivi Strip. It was flat as a pancake, and perfect tandem terrain. Again we were spoilt with decadent feed stations on the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere! Upon reaching the Protea Zambezi River Lodge, I followed the winning formula of the previous day – massage, lunch, afternoon siesta... War stories were plentiful over the scrumptious help-yourself buffet dinner. Strangely, the alcohol consumption was down quite dramatically.

This "Change a Life" cycle tour had a romantic ring to it – and four countries in three days guarantees bragging rights, but we would have to earn it on day three, over 220km!

My friend Kevin (who rode in takkies and toe-cages) and several others, started this epic challenge knowing there was going to be an easy option. A bus was available to transport the cyclists over the first hundred kilometres of the day. I had the opportunity to give the cyclists a little pep talk the night before. Knowing that only a handful of them had ever completed anything like 200km, I wanted to prepare them for the enormity of the challenge that lay ahead, and help them to deal with the fact that it was going to be as tough as hell. I told them to embrace the discomfort (imagine how disappointing it would be if it didn't hurt?) and not to give up too easily – at least not before they were stretched off the course!

The ride was broken down into doable stages. The 150km tea break was the golden distance to achieve, as it was then only 35km to lunch, and another 35km to the finish. Doable?? Definitely.



Mthunzi Mdwaba (Torque IT)

DAY 3 – ZAMBEZI RIVER LODGE TO LIVINGSTONE/VIC FALLS, 220KM


When the alarms went off, the heart rates increased automatically, as the number 220 danced about in our brains. Primal caveman instinct took over, and everyone was on a mission to pack in as many calories as possible in the attack on breakfast... except those who had yet to believe today was possible. They had lost their appetite.

No one opted for the 100km free ride at the start. After 7km we crossed the Zambezi into Zambia, then turned eastwards on the 213km home straight. It was here that all the groups suddenly worked as a peloton should. Even Thabang's wannabe Lance guys knew there was safety in numbers, especially when a cruel headwind came up.

There was silence in the peloton as if everyone was concentrating: am I drinking enough, eating enough, is that a tweak in my calf, will I make it? About halfway, our tandem gave us some grief. First it was a broken rear spoke (simply replaced with another rear wheel from the backup vehicle which miraculously appeared). Then our chain snapped. This required slightly more complicated magic from the mechanic, and brought a welcome rest for the sorest part of the body – the backside.

Nearing Vic Falls Bridge, Peter said to me. "Martin, its amazing, I was more tired after yesterday's ride". That's what adrenalin and the excitement of finishing a really big challenge can do for you. What Kevin and all the others accomplished that third day was inspirational. As a professional sportsman, somewhat accustomed to tackling the seemingly impossible, I know what it takes to be successful.

The following day was for leisure, and most of us went white water rafting down the Zambezi. Some went for a helicopter flip, and others rode on the backs of elephants. The gala function that night was glamorous, well-catered and staged in a beautiful setting, but the most magical ingredient was the electric buzz coming from all those excited people, who had achieved something amazing that day. Isn't it amazing what the human spirit can accomplish?

I'd like to say thanks to the Computershare 'Change a Life' cycle team for giving me the opportunity to have this incredible experience, which forged memories and friendships to last a life-time. And thanks to my tandem partner, Peter, for giving his all and making it fun. 

The Computershare Change a Life cycle raised R3 million for crime prevention and assistance to victims of crime. Next year, Rovos Rail will be a major partner in the tour. It is called "The Magical Mystery Tour". It will take place from 15 - 20 September and space is already limited. Any executives wanting to enter can contact Ursula du Plooy (ursula.duplooy@computershare.co.za). The cost is R20-thousand per entry and Computershare will again match every Rand raised.

