

## A letter from Africa, August 2010

Hello everyone,  
Yes I know. It happened. And it all went off rather well.

At least I imagine that is how Spain see the FIFA World Cup.

The English supporters should feel a little less happy with their lot as obscene salaries are paid to underperforming sportsmen.

South Africa did OK, I suppose, with disgraced France kindly allowing them at least one win to avoid some blushes.

All of South Africa's resources were on hand to try and make sure that the event took place without incident and in the end it all went smoothly (except transport) as well behaved supporters from all backgrounds converged under the one banner of "sports fan".

We were able to get to see two matches here in PE and we all went along to the Fan Park to see some others. Of course, the TV was a centre of attraction over the tournament, as all matches were aired live.



The weather down in PE was great on match days and we all enjoyed the atmosphere.



The first pic was taken by some Americans as we went by a beachfront bus to the Stadium .

This one of me was taken in the office and has me ready to *head off* to the Serbia/Germany match.

The other one is inside the stadium and tries to catch the atmosphere of flag waving and Vuvuzela blowing fans.

Please, please, do not let the Vuvuzela out of Africa. It may be a novel African noise to take back to Europe as a reminder of the WC but please ban it from English stadia.

All the talk and lots of braais were about the World Cup as it took over South Africa for 4 weeks.

It was successful although a lot fewer overseas supporters came along than was expected. The anticipated bookings for hotels and air flights did not materialise but by and large crime was lower than usual. The media tried to concentrate on good news stories and the unions held off their strikes.

It cost the tax payer millions in having all these special resources available like extra police, world cup law courts, extra buses and taxis etc but to most people it all seemed worthwhile and the hope is that fans will go back delighted with their SA experience and return on holiday or invest in the economy in some way or other.



The Government will spin a positive story about the value of the WC to SA but many are worried about the costs going forward and loss of GDP. Let us see how it all works out.

A quick note about the economy and politics. Oh no not that, it is so boring. A very quick note then.

Unemployment is up. We have lost about a million jobs over the last year but Government expenditure is hoped to keep our small growth going despite it not generating employment.

I think we are losing this battle as we have large numbers excluded from the official ranks of "unemployed" as they are no longer seeking employment. Perhaps we have 40%, maybe 30%, who knows. We do know that some 5 million tax payers provide social support hand outs to around 15 million people.

It is now accepted in all but the darkest corners that the country has a national crisis as it relates to corruption. Although our ex top policeman Jackie Selebi has been found guilty of corruption we also know that dozens of top people have their fingers in the till. The Selebi trial has cost the tax payer around R14 million so far, and that is for his defence!

Of concern is the effort by Government to silence the press over matters that they find embarrassing and a new bill may well make much investigative journalism illegal. Beware the slippery slope!

The opposition party of the DA has expressed their intentions of a marriage with the IDC .A small player although headed by much respected Patricia de Lille. The DA hold on to The Western Cape and their record of fair and competent governance is seen by all. We hope that they can reach out in 2011 to take Port Elizabeth. To do this they will need a lot of support from the coloured vote (IDC territory) and to make any significant national progress they must have some really good black faces in their top ranks and be seen as a party for all.

The ANC will fight back but their latest effort of promoting disgraced ex ANC CT leader to the position of Ambassador to America is an insult to the judicial system and all Americans.

There is some hope, however, as I do detect that some of the new ministers are at least talking as if they mean business and are trying to turn this big ship of SA around. We were even applauded for our recent efforts in tackling AIDS but were also one of the few countries in the world where the child mortality rate has increased. There is a long road ahead but we need to see the first steps and draw hope from this.



So I am still at work and Bev is to try a 3 day house sitting stint next week. My contract finishes at the end of Oct and then I must try and reclaim the social life that has been lost whilst I am working e.g bridge and golf.

We got away for a long week end with some friends and enjoyed 3 days in the Karoo (winter down here).



Weather varied from mid 20s°C to a last day in the teens. Never the less we enjoyed most meals outside including two good camp fire style braais.

Did some walking over the hills and along dried out river beds. Local dam has been empty since 2002. (By the way we still have a draught and water restrictions in PE.)



In our travels we encountered some lovely flocks of Blue Crane grazing amongst the mohair bearing Angora goats. Springbok that were spooked by us and displayed why they are called Springboks. Black Eagle, Gymogene, Malachite Sunbird, monkeys (see pic) and lots more from our keen eyed and knowledgeable bird watching friends.

We had Breakfast on the patio at the old Royal Hotel in Steytlerville overlooking the ox wagon wide roads on this quaint Karoo town.

That's it. As ever no more than 2 pages, but so much more to talk about.

Love, Bev and Alan