

An Emotional Reunion with a Business Associate – Yes, it is a small world!

By C. Don Parrish

I had not seen John Lutz for fifteen years and had often wondered what had happened to him and his wife.

In 1990, I started AT&T's switching business in Japan. The highlight of my career was winning the operator systems sale to NTT and managing it. John was the department head who was in charge of the development for all of the Operators Systems (OSPS) development projects including the huge development for NTT.

This past May, I returned from a six-week trip to the Indian Ocean and Africa. I spent four weeks on a French research ship in the Indian Ocean on a special one-time voyage, visiting four remote islands that surround Madagascar. These islands are virtually impossible for tourists to see and are among the most difficult places on the planet to visit. While I was in the "neighborhood", I visited all of the countries in Southern Africa I had never been to.

I spent the night at the famous Victoria Falls hotel in Zimbabwe, where I had stayed in 1976. Hearing that the water over the falls was at a 50-year peak, I decided to take a helicopter flight (I had taken 20 flights

from the French research ship so I may have been in helicopter withdrawal). Since there were no helicopter reservations to be had in Zimbabwe, I had to go across the Zambezi River to Zambia to get a helicopter.

After the outstanding helicopter flight, I noticed they had ultra lights so I signed up. While I was waiting for my flight, I saw a couple coming back from their flight. I thought they might want me to take a photo of them in their blue jumpsuits, so I told them as they walked up that they looked very official. Then I called out, "John!!!" It was John Lutz! I had not seen John since he retired in 1994.

During the development for the NTT OSPS project, John's wife got cancer and he decided to retire early to help her. Well it worked; there was a happy ending. Judy Lutz explained it to me very simply: "I am alive!"

John was very happy to see me, gave me a big hug and broke into tears. It was really quite an emotional reunion.

The day before John and Judy had been bungee jumping. I did not have enough time or I would have tried that, too!



Don Parrish and John Lutz hadn't seen each other for 15 years.



John and Judy Lutz the day after bungee jumping and meeting Don.



Don's Ultra light flight behind a German pilot



The spectacular view over Victoria Falls

Don's ultra light flight from the ground

