19th MAY - DEPARTURE

I AWOKE AT 8.00AM WITH THE ARRIVAL OF BED TEA. WE HAD A GREAT NIGHT WITH A BIG GROUP FOR DINNER AND VISITS FROM CRAIG FROM MOUNTAIN LINK, HENRY TODD AND HIS WIFE SUE, THE DISCOVERY TEAM, GUY COTTER AND CO, CHRIS WARNER AND HIS NEW GIRLFRIEND ALL CAME BY FOR DINNER. IT WAS A GREAT DINNER WITH A FEW BEERS, WHISKEYS ETC BUT NOTHING TOO CRAZY. THE SPANISH AND MEXICAN TEAMS CAME BY AT MIDNIGHT PRETTY DRUNK AND STAYED WHILST WE HAD ALL GONE TO BED.

WE ALL HAD BREAKFAST THE NEXT MORNING FROM WHICH FOR SOME REASON ERNESTO WAS ABSENT AND THEN I BEGAN THE ARDOUS JOB OF PACKING ALL MY BAGS, TWO TO BE SHIPPED TO LONDON WITH BOOTS, CRAMPONS, HARNESSES ETC AND TWO BAGS BASICALLY FILLED WITH DIRTY CLOTHES TO TAKE WITH ME TO PHUKET FOR URGENT LAUNDRY!!!

WE HAD OUR TEAM PHOTO WITH ALL THE SHERPAS, COOKS AND OURSELVES AND WE WERE ALL WEARING OUR BANCO DE CHILE EXPEDITION BASEBALL HATS BUT FOR SOME REASON ERNESTO WAS NOTICABLY ABSENT. PERTEMBA EVENTUALLY MANAGED TO RETRIEVE HIM FROM HIS TENT AFTER WE HAD ALL BEEN SITTING AROUND LIKE LEMONS FOR HALF AN HOUR AND HE APPEARED MINUS HIS BANCO DE CHILE HAT AND SEEMINGLY IN A REALLY BAD MOOD.

ANDREW CAME OVER AND SAID GOODBYE TO ME AND TOLD ME THAT THE ARGENTINIAN GUIDE GUSTAVO LISI THAT ID MET IN THE ICEFALL AND EN ROUTE TO CAMP 4 WHILST I WAS DESCENDING HAD TO BE RESCUED ON HIS SUMMIT ATTEMPT AND HIS CLIENT WAS LOST PRESUMED DEAD WHICH WAS AWFUL NEWS.

I SAID GOODBYE TO ANDREW AND TOLD HIM TO TAKE CARE IF HE TRIES TO CLIMB TO THE SUMMIT A SECOND TIME THIS TIME WITHOUT OXYGEN WHICH HE MAY BE DOING. I JUST CANT IMAGINE HAVING THE WILL POWER TO GO BACK A SECOND TIME MYSELF!!!!

AFTER LUNCH ANDRONICO AND I SAID A TEARY GOODBYE TO ALL OUR SHERPAS AND THE TEAM AND HEADED DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TOWARDS LOBUCHE WITH CHULDEN ONE OF OUR BASECAMP COOKS. THE WEATHER CHANGED AND IT BECAME OVERCAST AND STARTED TO SLEET. WE ARRIVED AT LOBUCHE LIKE DROWNED RATS AND GOT A "NOT SUCH A NICE ROOM" AND HAD DINNER AND WENT TO SLEEP. I WAS EAGERLY AWAITING OUR DEPARTURE BY HELICOPTER THE NEXT DAY!!!