

# From <sup>OUR</sup> Point <sup>OF</sup> View

---

## the Ladies of Mission Vanuatu

**Wednesday 12-19-07** - Kaela just left for play group with one of our neighbor friends from New Zealand and her two boys. Melia is down for her morning nap and I find myself with a few uninterrupted (for now) moments to catch up on my journal! While we were in the States for the birth of Melia several people said, "Cindy, I've missed your journal excerpts! Where have they been?" Well...life kind of got in the way of my staying on task with the journaling so here I am again with yet another attempt at keeping you up-to-date on my life as a missionary wife. A million thanks to everyone of you who take the time to read these excerpts! It really is a great encouragement to Shawnda and I that people care enough about us and the work that we are doing here to want to know more about our day to day life. We know life in the US is busy, busy, busy and we so we appreciate it EVEN MORE when you take the time to read about us and our lives in Vanuatu. So, here goes...

I LOVE Christmastime! I love it! Last night I was laying on my bed journaling and looking at my newly decorated 2 ft. Christmas tree and loving the feeling of the holidays...if only I had been wrapped in a cozy blanket and drinking a cup of hot chocolate instead of sprawled on my bed, sweating, with the fan on high. In the islands Christmas is just a whole different experience! But, sweat and all - it's good to be home.

Aaron, Kaela and I spent a nice time in the US awaiting the birth of Melia and then visiting our family and friends after her birth. But, I cannot deny it - it is good to be home. There is something so nice about being back in our own house, with our own stuff, and getting back into the swing of normal life. Although, it has taken me almost two weeks to get completely unpacked and organized! When it comes to getting things done at home, having two girls (and one a newborn that wants to nurse every 2 hours or so), has proved to be quite a challenge!

I know everyone has been concerned about us bringing Melia back to Vanuatu at such a young age. But, she is doing just great so far! She eats all the time and getting her accustomed to sleeping in her own bed in her own room has been MUCH easier than I had anticipated! We had a very rough first day back in Vanuatu - she cried and fussed all day and wouldn't eat very well. I think she was just exhausted from all the traveling and on top of that it is HOT here! But, we made it through that and all is well. Not that I am the least bit biased, but, that Melia Madelyn sure is a cutie! She really cracks Aaron and I up when she wants to let us know that she isn't happy about something. She doesn't just go right into crying but she kind of grunts around and "coos" loudly as kind of a warning. "You all better come attend to my needs or I'm going to let you know what I really think!" If we haven't picked her up by her desired time (for whatever reason) then she REALLY lets us know that she's unhappy! The girl has got some serious lungs on her! I don't ever remember Kaela crying as loudly as Melia does at this age! She is so precious and sweet though and we have all fallen in love with her! On side note - I've decided not to accompany Aaron to Etas for a while for the our Wednesday night Bible study. I just don't think Melia is big enough for a trek to the village. There are more mosquitoes at night and plus we have to walk partway through the bush to get to the church building. I just don't feel comfortable doing that with her being so little and our only light for walking at night being a flashlight. So, for now Melia and I will stay home on Wednesdays and Kaela will either go with Aaron or stay home with me. We'll see about that.

Kaela is doing fairly well adjusting back to life in Vanuatu. She seems to have forgotten some of her Bislama while we were in the States and so we are again going through the process of getting her to speak in Bislama - that's a challenge because we ALL know how easy it is to get a preschooler to do something that they don't want to do! Fun! Fun! Kaela is very affectionate with Melia (although I am aware that could change at any time) and is always singing to her and hugging and kissing her. She just wants so much to be the little Mommy to both Melia and Titus! I can tell that adjusting to life here away from the constant attention that grandparents bring has been a little difficult for her. Now she has to learn that if I'm feeding Melia I can't always jump up and go get whatever she wants right then. And that

can be hard for her. She cries more easily at things that she didn't used to cry at. I imagine it will just take her some time to get used to sharing the attention. In the mean time - she is looking forward to starting to preschool in February and loves to talk about what she's going to do in preschool. She'll be attending Port Vila International School (the private international school here in town) three times a week in the morning and she is SO EXCITED to go to "pretty school".

Monday was Mike's birthday and so we celebrated with steak and mashed potatoes for dinner (our efforts at buying okra or corn on the cob were in vein) and had apple pie and ice cream for dessert. Shawnda and I combined our efforts on making that apple pie and it turned out pretty tasty! She made the filling and I made the crust. I even got all creative and cut a design in the crust of the Denver Broncos logo since Mike LOVES the Broncos. I was pretty proud of myself for that!

Now that we are back in Vanuatu both Aaron and I are on a quest to lose the weight we gained in the States. (It's SO HARD not to gobble up all that yummy American food that we only get once in a while! You just can't imagine!) So, we are trying to eat better and go on walks in the evening. It's only bareable to walk right before the sun goes down. Daytime is just WAY TOO HOT!!! And since we don't eat dessert here very often (unlike the US) it is a lot easier - oh and did I mention our excessive sweating? It's like we get the benefits of a sauna all day long! Lucky us! Ha!

I just had to plug my computer in to charge the battery which means I had to unplug my fan and now I am back to sweating again! Yippee!

**Thursday 12-20-07** - When we got back to Vanuatu Aaron and I decided it was time to start a chore list for Kaela. She's getting old enough now that she can help around the house doing little jobs. So, we made a list of things that she would be responsible for each day (setting the table, picking up her toys, brushing her teeth, etc.) and for each task she completes she gets to pick a sticker. We are hoping this will give her a sense of accomplishment as she completes each responsibility. At least that is the plan! Let's hope it goes off without a hitch!

Eric and Shawnda told us that they want to get together to play Pitch (a card game) however, it has taken some doing to figure out how that is going to work with our three kids! So, I figured that since my kids are at more flexible stages than Titus, who needs his routine, then we could play at their house after the kids go to bed. So, tonight we loaded up Kaela's bedtime things, did our bedtime routine with Kaela at their house, took the girls over and were able to play a super fun game for about an hour. We had a really good time especially since it had been a long time since we had played cards together as just the two of us couples!

This morning before breakfast (you can do a lot before breakfast when you wake up at 5:15am!!!) I made a batch of brownies. I put them on some pretty red plates and took them to our two neighbor families for Christmas. They were so impressed that I was able to do what with two small kids - one of them a newborn. But, like I told them...Betty Crocker and I can work wonders together!!!

**Friday 12-21-07** - Fiona came today to sweep ours and the Brandell's houses. When I first moved to Vanuatu I would have NEVER said that I would want a house girl. In fact, I said just the opposite! But, since living here, I have learned that it is VERY commonplace to have a house girl and I cannot even begin to tell you what a help it is to me to have Fiona come and sweep my house twice a week, wash and hang clothes for me and other random things. Housework is very time consuming here since my house is open all the time. And it seems like I can never get on top of all the laundry that needs to be done! I don't know what I would do without Fiona! She is a wonderful friend, fun to have around, great with the girls and so much help to me! Anyway...that said, Shawnda and I went shopping this morning to get her a Christmas present. We bought her an umbrella and two lavalavas (which is like a skirt wrap thing). When we were at the handicraft market we saw Salome (which, by the way, in Vanuatu is pronounced Saw-lo-may). She help Melia and talked to us. When we told her that we were going to walk up the road and look for the lavalavas she was like, "Okay, you go and Melia can stay here with me". I was NOT so inclined to let the happen. I love Salome and I know she would take good care of Melia but I also know that Melia would be passed from person to person in the handicraft market too. On top of that I am just not ready to leave her by herself with someone that isn't used to her ways (like Shawnda and Fiona are). Anyway, Salome kept trying to convince me to leave Melia with her and I kept telling her no thank you. And of course I won out in that discussion and Melia went with us!

**Saturday 12-22-07** - Today was kind of a weird day for me. I couldn't really figure out why but Aaron said it is because it is so close to Christmas but doesn't feel like it and it is Saturday but, again, doesn't feel like it. He may be right. On top of that Melia has been quite difficult these last couple of days. I don't know if it is because she is hot or just trying to get adjusted but she won't sleep longer than 15-20 minutes at a time! And it's driving me crazy! I've been trying to wrap Christmas gifts these last few days. And I get 2 or 3 wrapped and then run down the hall to try and coax her back to sleep or get her up because she is wide awake. When she's awake she's fussy (maybe it is the heat - it has been SO humid!). Finally, at about 5pm tonight she fell asleep in her swing and she's been asleep for the last 2.5hrs. The good nap she should have taken this morning or afternoon! I guess part of my problem today is that I am just feeling like I am having trouble adjusting to my new role in life. Mother of two. Aaron and I talked about it for a while tonight at dinner. And he made some very good points. Like, I can't compare what I did to help with the work before Melia was born to now. Because before I had much more free time to work on Bible studies, correspondence courses, my school, etc. But, now I have a WHOLE lot less free time and feel like I'm always trying to find time to work on other stuff! Aaron told me (reminded me) that I need to just concentrate on taking care of Kaela and Melia because that is my number one job. And by taking care of them I free him up to be able to do his work. I knew all that - why did I forget it and get all frustrated? I guess that is just the way it is sometimes! Sometimes I just need Aaron to remind me of the things I should already know!

Tomorrow we head to Etas for worship. It is going to be SO HOT and I kind of dread that! Last week I nearly melted during worship in Vila because we don't have fans yet. The guys took them out until we get doors (which we have) and windows (which we don't ) put in so they wouldn't get stolen. Anyway, it was meltingly hot! I'm not sure the village is going to be much better. Maybe it will rain tomorrow and cool things off...but then we have to deal with mud...I sure miss those nice cold US temperatures sometimes!

**Sunday 12-23-07** - Aaron and I went to Etas this morning. It was wonderful to see everyone again and the Christians there were all very excited to see Melia for the first time. However, it was SO HOT! So far, Melia has been having some trouble with the heat. If she isn't under a fan she gets so hot which makes her upset and she cries a lot! And if you remember me saying so, that Melia has got some serious volume behind her cries! During worship she got hungry and since it isn't my cup of tea to breastfeed right in the middle of worship, I went and sat on an empty bathtub behind Pbles and Ruth's house. (Can't say I've ever fed a baby on a bathtub before...but...whatever!) I was trying to feed Melia but she was so hot and that just made her cry and then she got mad because she wasn't eating which made her cry even louder. And of course everyone under the shelter could hear her carrying on at the top of her lungs. All her loud crying and being SO HOT got me all frustrated which just made me hotter but I couldn't fan us both AND get her calmed down at the same time. Needless to say it was just a difficult situation! Finally, Salome came behind the house to check on us and tried fanning me while I nursed but Melia was just too worked up to nurse so I gave up on that plan and we just tried to get her cooled off and calmed down. Which, we finally did. After that she was a little sweetheart until almost time for us to go and I could tell she was hungry again so I tried to feed her but she wasn't having it. So, she did her crying thing again and Salome came over and walked her around again and she calmed down and was fine. What a deal! I told Aaron that we REALLY needed to go because Melia needed to eat and once we were in the truck with the wind blowing in the windows she ate herself a good meal and then went right to sleep. After all that I decided that I wasn't going to make anymore trips to the village in this heat until she gets bigger and can handle the heat more. It is just too hard on the two of us! I'll miss not going to Etas very often but caring for Melia and making sure she is staying cool enough and eating well is just more important right now!

Another crazy thing happened during worship too - I was sitting on one of the benches next to Misuel (one of the newer Christian men) when all of a sudden a flying fox (a bat) swoops down from a tree and lands on his leg! He jumped about a mile in the air and I just kept inching further and further down the bench. I am terrified of all animals with wings and I wanted NO PART in being near that flying fox! Once Misuel got over his shock he calmly detached the flying fox from his leg and got up and put it back in the tree. The rest of the day I kept one eye on what I was doing and one on that tree because I

was so nervous it would come swoop down and land on me! If that had been me during worship instead of Misuel I'm not sure I would have been able to keep myself from running away screaming! I am THAT terrified of things that fly!

Today was also a very, very sad day for me. During our fellowship lunch Leimawa told me that one of the girls that was in my school died while I was in the States. I cannot begin to tell you how sad I was to get that news. It was all I could do to keep from crying my eyes out right then and there. Her name was Lissing and she was about 11 or 12 years old. She was kind of ornery during school but she was also a really sweet girl and I loved her. She got some kind of infection while we were gone and spent about two weeks in the hospital and then she died. My heartaches when I think about her. I will miss her so much come next school session. I always refer to the kids in the school as "my kids" and for me I never felt that possession more than when I heard of Lissing's death. She was *my* kid, I loved her and I invested time in helping her get some education and I put my whole heart into teaching her, just as I do with all the other kids. I will miss her so much! According to Vanuatu custom when there is a death, I plan to take a gift to her Mom and Dad when the Christmas holiday is over.

**Monday 12-24-07** - Today is Christmas eve, although you couldn't prove it by me with this weather! But, I guess the fact that I have Christmas decorations up and there are people doing their Christmas shopping and every store is a madhouse! Our friends from New Zealand, Antony and Jeanette Raine and their two boys, Kevin (16) and Jeremiah (13) are going to be spending Christmas with us and we are SO EXCITED about that! It will be great to have someone here to spend the holidays with us - they have come to visit us so often that they are practically family now! Our plan is to open our presents from each other tonight and then tomorrow morning to open our "Santa presents" in our stockings.

**Wednesday 12-26-07** - We had a wonderful Christmas! Kaela and Titus, especially, had fun with all the present opening and all the new toys and things they accumulated! Kaela is especially enjoying a Disney princess play cell phone that she got. It takes pretend pictures and she spent all morning taking pictures of every single present in the room! She thought that was the coolest! Antony and Jeanette also gave her Kevin and Jeremiah's old Karaoke machine and she has had a ball singing and talking into the microphone and hearing her voice come out of the speaker! Since she is a bit of an "entertainer" anyway, this was a great toy for her!

We had a late breakfast of grilled bacon, eggs and pancakes and then Shawnda, Antony and I watched Casablanca while Aaron and the Raine boys played Playstation. Eric napped and so did Jeanette, Titus and Melia. And Kaela ran from house to house showing us all she could do with her Karoke machine! Later we had a late Christmas lunch of grilled steak, corn on the cob, baked potatoes, and pepper poppers (that the peppers were SO HOT on that only Mike could stand the heat from them!) Later we all went for a walk to the park to let Kaela and Titus get some exercise and had to take a different route back home because some drunk me were fighting on the road that we came down! By the time we got home we were all starved and sweating buckets!

Today, the day after Christmas is a holiday in Vanuatu called Family Day. So, for Family Day we decided it would be fun to go to Eton Beach. (Us and about a 100 other people! Ha!) the Raines wanted to drive around the island but none of us wanted to do that so we all packed a lunch and headed out about 10am to Eton Beach. We had a picnic lunch and then swam for a couple of hours. The water felt GREAT on such a hot day and we all had a super fun time! Then, our Vanuatu team (minus Mike because he stayed home) loaded up and headed back to Vila with our three sleepy kids and the Raines went on around the island. They got home about 6pm and then we all went out to dinner to The Waterfront for Antony's birthday (which isn't until Sunday). I had some GREAT BBQ ribs! Yum!

**Thursday 12-27-07** - It's SO HOT! It's SO HOT! It's SO HOT! How could I have forgotten how incredibly hot it is here at this time of year? I am literally roasting alive! I spend from about 6pm on looking forward to the cold shower I can take right after Kaela goes to bed at 8:30. Afterwards, I get in my pajamas (we have early nights here in Vanuatu) and sprawl on my bed directly under the fan trying to keep cool so I can have a good nights sleep. Sometimes, in the middle of the night I have to get a cold rice pack out of the freezer and sleep with it just to cool myself down enough that I can sleep. It's December. Our worst months of heat and humidity are February and March. Cool season doesn't start

until May and I can hardly wait! Unfortunately, that's 5 months away...

**Saturday 12-29-07** - Well, I've had two nights in a row of about 5 hrs. sleep each. Thursday night the culprit was Melia the unsleepable. She was awake and screaming her head off for a good 2 hrs in the middle of the night. After I fed her at 12:30am I tried to rock her back to sleep at about 1:15. However, she wasn't having it. She was tired - I KNEW she was! But, she squirmed and fussed and cried so much that I finally just put her in her bed. There didn't seem to be anything wrong - she was dry, fed, loved and sleepy but refusing to sleep! Once in bed she WAS NOT a happy camper and cried and cried and cried! But, Aaron and I decided (along with help from our Baby's First Year book) that it is time for her to start learning to sooth herself back to sleep. She apparently wasn't interested in doing that. Because two hours later she was still crying. She would calm down when we went in to pat her back and give her her pacifier but then it was back to screaming after we left. But, we held on strong! An hour later, Melia finally gave up and went to sleep (all by herself!) and Aaron and I were left to hope someone would come in sooth us back to sleep!

Then, last night my phone rang at 11pm. Aaron and I had put the girls down at 8:30 (as usual) and then he went back over to Eric and Shawnda's where they were watching Pirates of the Carribean 2. I stayed home and drifted off to sleep about 9pm. Then, I woke with a start to the sound of my phone. One of my friends was calling (who shall remain nameless because I really don't want anyone to think negatively of her and her husband). She was bawling her eyes out and I could hardly understand her. Her and her husband had gotten in a fight and he started hitting her. This is the first time he has ever laid a hand to her. He is one of the few men in Vanuatu that doesn't hit his wife. But, something happened between them and he lost control of his anger and hit her. She called to tell me she was going to go to her father's house for the night and then have him come and get all her stuff so she could move out. Not good. For a couple of reasons...1) Rash decisions are never a good thing - so I told her that if she wanted to sleep there tonight then tomorrow we would go talk with her husband and try to fix this problem. 2) Bringing other family members into it almost always results in a fist fight - fathers and brothers vs. the husband - which in turn can bring retaliation from the husband's family. We talked for a while and I ended up calling her back and telling her to come stay the night at our house. Which she did. As it turned out she could get a bus (since it was 11pm and she lives so far out of town). So, I told her Aaron would come to get her and we went and told Eric and Shawnda what was going on so Eric could go with him to get her so I could stay with the girls. She and I talked a long time both last night and again this morning about what went on. Her and her husband are pretty much newly weds who barely knew each other before they decided to be married. On top of that Vanuatu culture isn't known for it's communication between people! So, instead of talking about problems this couple was just each doing their own thing, getting mad at each other, and then letting things "go" that needed to be talked about. Then you just have a build-up until it explodes! Her husband called her this morning before breakfast and asked her to come home. She wanted go but after Aaron went to talk with him. Aaron went this morning and talked to him. I talked with her and told her that since it isn't in her husbands character to hit her normally then something must have drove him to it and we need to find out what and then try to right it. We both told each of them that they HAD to talk about what happened or it would get pushed back and wait to come up again at a later date and the problem would never really be resolved. Aaron and I were both very impressed with her husband because he had such a repentant heart about hitting her. He knew it wasn't right and he felt bad for it and wanted her to come back to him. He talked to Aaron a long time about the struggle he faces in trying to do what is right in his Christian walk and yet sometimes it seems like he continues to mess up. That opened a door for Aaron to spend time talking with him about how that is struggle that ALL Chrisitans face - and what Paul wrote about - we know the good we ought to do and yet we still don't do it. And we know the things we ought not do and still we do those! But, that is what you face as a Christian. It's about CONTINUALLY trying to do what is right in the eyes of God and though we fail he still offers us his forgiveness.

Long story short...or shorter, I guess...they are back together and seem to be doing better. They both are precious friends to us and Aaron and I want so much to see them grow in their Christian walk. We are just thankful that they came to us and were willing to talk about what happened rather than hide it and try to seek help from people in the world.