

# From <sup>O</sup><sub>R</sub> Point <sup>O</sup><sub>F</sub> View

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## the Ladies of Mission Vanuatu

**Sunday 2-3-08** - Well, the day for the Brandells to leave for the US finally arrived. I was saddened that I didn't get to say my good-bye to Shawnda like I would have liked. Today was a fellowship meal Sunday plus I had to teach Bible class in the morning and Aaron was in Etas so I had the girls with me and they were leaving! My brain was going in about 8 directions at once and I ended up being rushed to say my good-bye because it was time to start Bible class. Oh well. What can you do? I sure will miss those Brandells! But, I am SO HAPPY for them and the exciting time they are going to have in the US! I can't wait to see their new baby! I also wished I could have held Titus one last time but that didn't work out either!

Bible class went really well this morning. It took me about 5 minutes or so to get in the "groove" of it. Shawnda has been teaching as of late so it has been a while since I have taught class. I had a really good time, though, with the kids. There were about 9 of them. I gave two certificates for kids that learned all their books of the NT and next week Kaela will get her certificate since she learned all of hers! I was so proud! What a good girl! I translated the song, "I'm all wrapped up, tied up, tangled up in Jesus" and taught it to the kids in Bislama. They LOVED it and had a really fun time trying to get the actions right.

We had a good turnout for worship and the fellowship meal. I was very glad for that! And it was a nice time. By the time I got home at 1:30pm with Kaela and Melia, I was beat, though! I got them both off to take naps and then I took one myself. When I was headed home I talked to Aaron on the phone. He was just getting ready to leave Etas with a group of people who are going to take the classes he and Mike are teaching for the Bible school - Truth Bible School. Today is orientation day and classes start on Tuesday. Looks to be a busy week!

**Tuesday 2-5-08** - Well, today was Aaron's first day of classes for Truth Bible School. He ended up having a really good turnout! I think he, Mike and Eric had expected about 5 students and they ended up with 14 the first night! Hopefully, the interest will stay high like that throughout the term! Since he was gone for dinner we had a big lunch today and then I made him a sandwich and sent it with him. He had to leave at 3:45 to go pick up Patrick who lives out on a farm way outside of Vila. I'm glad things went so well. Aaron has had a really stressful time getting things all lined out for the school and it was definitely beginning to wear on him. I know he and Mike were both pleased with the results of the first day!

**Wednesday 2-6-08** - Well, Kaela's big day finally arrived! Her first day of preschool! Unfortunately, I came down with something during the night which we originally thought was a stomach virus but now we are pretty sure it was a mild case of food poisoning. (We know officially now that our refrigerator is NO GOOD and hopefully the rental company will see to it

that we get a new one right away! However, in the mean time I have a bunch of meat I have to throw out and I am all peeved about having to spend more grocery cash to replenish what went bad!) I had planned, and was ALL EXCITED to take Kaela to her first day of school. But, by this morning I wasn't in any shape to leave the house and had to stay home. I was very saddened about that. But, sometimes things happen and you can't control them. Anyway, she was so cute this morning all dressed up in her school clothes and wearing her backpack! We took a video and some pictures to send to the family. She was SO EXCITED to go! It was kind of a funny feeling for Aaron and I. I know it is just preschool but it was kind of like "the first day of the rest of our lives" kind of feeling. This is what our life will be like for the next 18 years...sending our girls off to school in the morning. Wow. That is crazy to think about!

Right after Kaela and Aaron left for school, Fiona came over (I had called her during breakfast). I asked her to come watch Melia for me today. With the food poisoning I didn't get very much sleep last night - plus I felt all nauseated today so she came so I could go back to bed and not have to worry about Melia. What a blessing she is to come help me! So, I basically slept all morning and laid around. I had hoped to be feeling better by the time to pick up Kaela at 11:30 but I still wasn't, so I stayed home, yet again, and Aaron went to pick her up. And he brought back with him one tired little girl! Kaela had a GREAT time at preschool! I knew she would! She played play-doh, painted, listened to stories, played outside, had "morning tea" (snack time), and met all kinds of new kids! I am so thankful that she has this opportunity! She sure was tired when she got home, though. We fed her lunch and put her right to bed afterwards and she was more than ready for a good nap!

**Thursday 2-7-08** - Well, now we are more certain than ever that we got the food poisoning. I fed Aaron a ham sandwich for dinner last night with basically the same things on it that I had on my salad on Tuesday night. And last night he was sick all night - not severely ill but, mighty uncomfortable! We put our thermometer (that we forgot we had) in the fridge and found that the temp in it is only about 50 degrees! No wonder we are getting sick! We keep telling our rental company that our fridge is no good but they haven't been much help. They sent out a repair man who BARELY looked at the thing, declared the thermostat needed changing and did that. Aaron and I were a little perturbed about that because he didn't spend five minutes looking at our fridge and now it is still broken! Anyway, Aaron's going to call the rental company AGAIN and maybe we will get somewhere with this problem. In the mean time he plans to move the Brandell fridge into our house.

**Saturday 2-9-08** - Aaron and Mike were scheduled to go to Eton village and teach their classes this morning. There were some extenuating circumstances of why the Eton men wouldn't be coming into Vila for the classes to Mike and Aaron offered to make the trip out Eton each Saturday. They left here about 7am and much to my surprise pulled up to the house again at 9:35am. It turns out that only one of the men showed. We have an idea of why that happened...those extenuating circumstances...of which I will not get into at this time! Needless to say they are going to try and go again next Saturday in hopes of a better turnout but if things are the same they won't make the trip again. It just takes too much time and gas money to make that trip for only one man to show up and everyone else to not come

as a result of those “extenuating circumstances.

Anyway, the up side is that we got to spend an unexpected day together as a family and that was really nice! With the craziness of this week (two schools starting), the stress that Aaron is under and him being gone two evenings it was nice to enjoy some time together!

**Sunday 2-10-08** - Sometimes mission work is so hard here in the city. From what I have heard of the past it has always been that way. Its just difficult to get people to commit to coming every week to worship! And that can be frustrating and disheartening! There was just a small group of us Christians plus about 8 kids this morning. I was disappointed with the attendance since last week we had a lot of people for worship (almost everyone!). I had hoped the great fellowship we had would fuel their desire to make more of an effort at coming every week...however, it doesn't always work out that way, does it?! BUT! We won't let that stop us! We'll just keep on working to strengthen the Christians and maybe one day in the future Port Vila will be self-sustaining, so to speak, and a strong light in the community!

**Tuesday 2-12-08** - Yesterday we had a delightful day. Aaron took the day off...sort of. He has a really hard time taking a full, complete day off of work. He ran errands this morning and sent some emails that needed his attention and then spent the rest of the day enjoying some time off. At least until 6pm when he and Mike were scheduled to meet with Claude and Flexon regarding some Vila business. However, there was a death in Claude's family so he didn't show up at Mike's for Mike to bring him, so Mike ended up not coming either (he and Aaron decided to cancel the meeting) and so Aaron just met with Flexon and still talked about some Vila business and other things of some sort. So, it was his day off...sort of.

Tonight was SO CRAZY! Kaela was having a rough time of it. Ann and her little boy, Jonathon, came over to stay with us while Aaron was at class. We decided it would be fun to paint our toes. Only, I was feeding Melia and Kaela was playing with my nail polish, looking at all the colors. I wasn't watching her when she started hitting two nail polishes together (I guess she liked the noise they made). Well, all of a sudden she screamed and I looked up and there was purple glitter nail polish all over her dress, her legs and the mat on the floor! It was everywhere! And of course there was bits of glass too. She was starting to freak out and I was trying to keep her calm (which wasn't working). I finally got her all cleaned up with the help of some nail polish remover, but that dress will never be the same and she was SO UPSET! Oh-I had her sitting up on the counter by the sink to clean her legs which turned out to add more fuel to the fire. Our little girl, who is SO DRAMATIC (I'm sure she doesn't get it from me! Ha!) was looking in the mirror and putting on quite the crying show. I finally had to tell her to quit looking at herself because when she did you could tell she was almost enjoying the misery of the moment!

The night ended up good, though. Kaela said the FUNNIEST thing! We took Ann home when Aaron got back. When we got home from that Kaela came in my room and hold her hands out to me palms up and goes, “Mommy, are there brothers?” What?! I had no idea what she was talking about. She asked again, and I was still confused. Finally, Aaron calls from the bathroom, “She means Brethren!” Ha! Every Sunday after church we bring her home and I send her to the bathroom to “wash the Brethren off” and she thought there might be “brothers” on her hands and they needed watching. Ha!

**Friday 2-15-08** - Tonight is team night! Mike's coming over for dinner and we're eating Fajitas! Everyone's favorite! It should be a fun evening!

**Saturday 2-16-08** - Ever since Eric and Shawnda left to go back to the States, things have been getting steadily hotter here. Shawnda is SO FORTUNATE to not be here! She would be in misery for sure to be so far along with the heat like it is! Today, I felt like I was literally swimming in sweat! I needed an avocado and some exercise so I walked to town this afternoon while the girls were sleeping. Wow. I'm not sure that was a good idea. The walk down the hill to town wasn't too bad but on the way back...WOOOOOWEEEE! I thought I was going to fall over I was so hot! It's amazing the power of the sun in the islands. I felt like it was blaring down on my back from 30 feet above me and I was dragging by the time I got to our street. Every house I passed I kept thinking, "Okay, I can make it to Rhonda's"...and then at Rhonda's I told myself... "I can make it to Jack and Kay's and I almost be home!" ...Finally, I made it to our driveway and I have never been so happy to see my bed and the fan! With this incredible heat and humidity there has to be rain in the near future! We need it just so we can breathe again!

Aaron and Mike went to Eton village again today to try and teach their courses. And the same as last week, to their frustration, no one showed up. This is the last time they are making the drive all the way out there to teach when no one seems interested...disappointing...

So, since Aaron wasn't gone all day at Eton we cleaned house and moved his bookcases from the office over to our house. And then we moved my desk from our house to the office so I can have a place to work on my computer and have internet access.

**Sunday 2-17-08** - Bible class this morning went well. I worked both Friday and Saturday making a flipchart about why we come to church...i.e. to worship God, the 5 parts of worship and to show Jesus that we love Him. With such a large group of kids coming each week, and since there isn't really much by way of adult supervision, these kids are in desperate need of some instruction on how to act during worship...hence the flip chart!

**Monday 2-18-08** - I had just the nicest day today! It was a pretty quiet day and that was a nice change from the norm! Aaron and I dropped Kaela off at school at 7:30 this morning and then we headed home with Melia. When we got home, Aaron worked on his computer for a bit while I fed Melia and Fiona went over to clean Eric and Shawnda's house. Then, about 9:00 Aaron and I walked to town (Wow! That was a hot walk!) for a coffee date. We both had cappuccinos and I had some toast and jam also. It was so nice to get away and just spend some time together without interruptions! I guess that is what a date is! It sure did feel funny walking to town without kids in tow, though! I felt like I had forgotten something the whole way to town! After our date, Aaron had to pick up the seat to our truck from the workshop and Melia was sleeping so I walked down to Rhonda's house and spent about 30 minutes chatting with her, just catching up. I've been meaning to get down to see Rhonda for over a week now and I just haven't made it - and she only lives two doors down! Then, Aaron, Melia and I went and picked up Kaela from school, Fiona went home, then we had lunch and it was naptime for the girls. After dinner we watched Kaela ride her new bike with training wheels

that my parents sent us money to go get (she loves it!) and then we played Pay Day together. Pay Day is a great game for the three of us to play. The concepts of the game are a little over Kaela's head so Aaron and I are the only ones with game pieces. Kaela gets to be "Miss Banker?" (which she does a great job at since she knows her colors), "Miss Realtor" (she hands out the deal cards, if you know what I'm talking about) and "Miss Post Girl" (and she hands out the letters). She stays busy the whole game doing all that plus we let her roll the dice for us! It's great family fun!

**Wednesday 2-20-08** - Well, my leisurely break that I enjoyed on Monday came to an abrupt halt yesterday! Melia woke up about 5:30 and was ready to nurse, so I did that. Then as soon as I got done I tried to put her between us in bed to sleep again but she wasn't interested in sleeping. So, I got up with Melia so Aaron could get some extra sleep. I felt like I was doing good with my tasks because I got muffins baked this morning (Kaela woke up to help) and my shower taken all before Aaron got up! I was feeling good because yesterday was shopping day and I knew I had to get done with my shopping in time to come home and make lunch for our family plus Tom (who came to cut the grass) and Fiona (who came to watch the girls while I went to the store). However...right after breakfast Tom arrived, as did Salome (from Etas) she wanted to talk to me about some problems she is having with her husband. Without going into the details we spent nearly 2 hours talking and studying about Marriage/Divorce and Enduring Hardship in Life. Her visit kind of set me back in getting things done on time but I am REALLY glad she came to talk with me and I had the opportunity to study with her. I love Salome so much and I just ache for her that she is having so many marital problems. Her husband seems to be doing all he can to make it hard for her to be a Christian and seek spiritual growth. I can't understand why some people have no interest in growing spiritually when they have every opportunity to grow at their door and here is Salome who wants so much to grow in her Christian life but, continually faces obstacles that make it hard for her to do that!

After studying with her I went shopping, adding Salome to my lunch list. Thankfully, things went pretty smoothly shopping and I got back by 11:15, started some lunch things, fed Melia and had Fiona help me finish getting the hamburgers and fixings ready for Aaron to grill. Kaela was busy entertaining Salome during all that. After lunch, Fiona went home, Tom went home and Salome stayed to do her homework for Aaron and Mike's class tonight. Kaela went down for her nap just fine but Melia had other ideas! By this time (1:15pm) I was really starting to drag since I had been up and busy since 5:30 and I REALLY wanted to take a nap but...that didn't happen! We like to call Melia our little "Toot Sweet" (from the song on Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang) because sometimes she is toot but she is also SO sweet! And today she was the toot! She would not go to sleep! Everytime I'd get her quieted down in bed she was at it crying again for all she was worth! She finally went to sleep at 3pm, 15 minutes before Kaela woke up so I didn't really get much rest! Then, Aaron got ready and left to go pick up Patrick (who lives way outside of town) for class. I talked with Salome some more, we played with Kaela and then I made her a sandwich before she left for Aaron's class at 5:15. Then, I made mine and Kaela's dinner (a salad for me and a PB&honey sandwich for Kaela). At 6pm, Mike brought Ann over to some stay the evening with us, I made her dinner, fed Melia, we finished watching a movie for about 45minutes. Then, it was time to shower Kaela (who put up a big fight during that whole process and I had to bring out the

discipline troops!) and Aaron got home at 7:30. Then, we took Ann and her little boy, Jonathon, home. When we got back, I gave Melia a bath, read to Kaela, fed Melia, Aaron did singing and praying with Kaela and both girls were down by 8:15. Unfortunately, Melia doesn't like to rock to sleep...she likes to be walked and I walked in a circle in her room for what felt like FOREVER. After that, I went to the kitchen and got Kaela's snack ready for "morning tea" at school...carrot sticks (that I had to make because we don't have the luxury of baby carrots!) with dip, crackers and a muffin. Aaron was a DEAR and helped me put the dog food that I made earlier in the day in its storage containers for the freezer and fridge. (Dog food for us is rice and hamburger meat). I showered and literally FELL into bed at 8:45 and went to sleep immediately! Aaron had promised me a back rub earlier in the day and I didn't even stay awake long enough to get it! Usually, I will do anything for a backrub but I was so tired today I couldn't even stay awake for one! So, that's the breakdown of my day! I told you it was busy!

**Saturday 2-23-08** - After a couple of days of SWELTERING HEAT the rains finally came! Unfortunately, I didn't get to enjoy it to its fullest because I was doubled over in pain for a good four hours last night. I don't know what my problem was, I guess I ate something that didn't love me. I spent those four hours trying to figure out what exactly that was, but I couldn't come up with anything because Aaron and I pretty much the same things all day and he didn't get sick. I finally went to sleep about 3:45am (after feeding Melia) and slept peacefully with the cool breeze from the rain coming in our window. By morning I was feeling much better. And on top of that I got to enjoy the AWESOME weather all day!

Aaron had to go to Etas this morning at about 8:30. There was a family member of Sam's that died this week. He was an old man that was still living on Tanna Island and today they were all planning a big kakae (meal) in remembrance of him. When he got home about 11am, we all had lunch together and spent some nice family time before Kaela and Melia's naps. The rest of the day was nice and quiet - probably due to the excessive rain this weekend - no one really wanted to get out in the mess!

So far we've received a few emails from congregations/individuals in the States that funds have been donated for the land at Etas. We are SO EXCITED about this because it will finally mean that they can own the some land that will belong exclusively to the church! Yea! They need this so much! Originally, we came to Vanuatu with the belief that overseas funds SHOULD NOT be used to fund church related projects over here. But, after seeing the people, how they live, how little money they make, how small the contribution is each week and in contrast how expensive land and building materials are here - we realize they would never be able to afford to save their money to buy their own land and building materials. There just isn't enough money to go around! Many of the Christians here can barely afford to have a decent roof over their heads and many of them (especially in Etas) spend their time wiping up the water that comes in their houses every time there is heavy rain. We are so thankful, as are they for the Christians in the States who have so generously given of their own personal increase to help God's family in Vanuatu.

**Sunday 2-24-08** - After another nice, cool rainy night we were glad to wake up refreshed and not sweating! However, when Aaron went out on the front porch to view the day, he noticed a little puppy dog laying in the grass almost under our porch. The poor little thing was

drenched and barely breathing. We tried to keep Kaela from seeing it but her curiosity was too much and she ended up seeing it anyway. As we figured she was very concerned about the poor little dog and was hopeful that it would get better. Aaron and I tried to talk to her about how the dog was sick and such. She took it okay, but probably didn't understand what we were talking about. Well, we checked on it periodically during breakfast but, about an hour later Aaron checked on it again (before we left for worship) and it had died. We told Kaela that it had died and she took it really well, which I was surprised about. I realized later after lunch why she took it so well. She and I were talking about it and she commented that when the dog gets better she could play with it. Well, I told her again that the poor doggy died and it wasn't going to get better. Well, she goes, "Well, when it comes back to life, then I can play with it!" I told her gently, that things don't come back to life once they are dead. They are just dead. Of course, I meant now days, however, she threw me for a loop when she said, "Well, Mommy, Jesus came back to life!" I guess it made sense to her that if Jesus could come back to life so could the puppy! So, then of course I had to explain to her all about why that is. Wow. What a subject to broach with a three year old! It almost rivaled the time she asked me where Satan is right now and what he is doing. That was a difficult one to explain in terms she could understand!

I gave out my second issue of Yumi Oi Mama this morning. Unfortunately, Rosemary wasn't at worship again this Sunday. She hasn't been around for about a month now and even though we went to see her it hasn't made much difference yet. I really like Rosemary and she is a good friend. I am planning to go visit her this week and get the "REAL" story of why she hasn't been at worship - not just the "placate the missionary version".

**Monday 2-25-08** – Kaela keeps coming back from school saying the funniest things! Sometimes it takes me a minute or two to figure out what she is talking about. This week she said something about our "kays" and I finally realized she was talking about our "keys"! The funniest was at lunchtime today she told me all about a little story she learned in school. It was about two boys named "Pita and Poll". I'd like to have never convinced her that their names were actually "Peter and Paul"!

We found out today that our neighbor, Jack, went back to the States for a month. He, his wife and son live next door and are missionaries/retirees with the Assembly of God and Joy Bible Institute here in Vila. They are a very nice couple. Also, our neighbors two houses down are leaving on Sunday for New Zealand for three weeks. It sure will seem quiet around here in March when you add to it that Eric and Shawnda are still gone, as well.

**Tuesday 2-26-08** – It's been raining for the last few days and the weather has been such a treat! Almost as nice as it is in June or July! Oh, how I can't wait for the cool season! Just one more month to go and then things start cooling down. It was even so cool this evening that I actually put pants and socks on Melia because her legs were cold! I felt a little like you would if you found yourself wearing shorts in February!

I did my grocery shopping this morning. Fiona came over to watch the girls and that is always such a big help to me! Kaela has been begging me to go shopping with me and I intended to take her today. However, with all the rain (and there was TONS today) I was glad I hadn't promised her anything and I went and did my shopping alone. I had several places to go in town so I was glad I could get it done a little faster without her in tow. Maybe next

week that will work out.

It is amazing the increase in prices here. Over the last three years so many food items have gone up in price and that is frustrated on our end by the value of the American dollar decreasing. Here are some examples... think of vatu as cents. When we first came 1 kilo of rice (2.2 pounds) was 90 vatu and now it is 120vatu. A loaf of white slice bread was 200vatu and now it is up to 240vatu. Oil has gone up from 200vatu for a liter to 240vatu. Eggs have jumped from 330vu. to 440vu. And flour used to be 80vatu for a kilo and now is 120vatu.

**Friday 2-29-08** – On Wednesday we went to dinner at our friend's, Luke and Ricki's, house. They are the ones with the two girls that are close to Kaela's age. We had fajitas! Yum! And those girls had just the best time playing! It was a nice evening. Ricki and the girls leave next month to go back to the States to have her baby.

So much for the nice cool weather! We are back to the sweltering heat of February! It seems insane how sometimes it is so hard to get cool!

Aaron took Kaela to school this morning because I woke up late and didn't have time to shower. And the world just doesn't want to see my pre-shower self! So, he took her to school, Fiona came over to sweep and watch Melia while I did some visiting. I got myself showered and a few chores done and then headed out to go visit Rosemary. She hasn't been to worship in about a month so I went to go see her and try to encourage her to come. We had a nice visit and hopefully I will see her on Sunday. After I got back home, Melia was asleep so I ran over to Jack and Kay's house to check on Kay. I wanted to try and encourage her to have a local come and stay the night with her and Jay. It just isn't safe for the two of them to be staying the night alone here. They really need to have someone with them to watch over the house, especially since break-ins are common at their house. Thankfully, Kay told me that she is having a young man she knows from her church that is going to stay in the guest house on their property and watch over things while Jack is gone. That will certainly help Aaron and I to rest easier! After Melia woke up I worked on some lunch preparations, Fiona left to go home and then Aaron and I left to pick up Kaela from school. After lunch Kaela and I went to see Rhonda and take few things back to her before she and family head out to NZ for three weeks. She wasn't home but I did get to visit with her housegirl and invite her to worship some Sunday. I don't know that she will come, but it never hurts to ask! Then, it was Kaela and Melia's naptime so we headed back home and did all that. After Kaela's nap we headed back down to Rhonda's to try and catch her at home, which we did and also met the girl who is going to housesit for them in their absence. We stayed for about 45 minutes and then beat it back home so I could start on dinner for Mike and Aaron. It's team night tonight and we are having spaghetti. Yum! By the time bedtime rolled around for the girls I was ready for a break! It has been a long day and I am ready for rest!