

From ^OR ^O Point ^F View

the Ladies of Mission Vanuatu

Cindy's Journal – April 2008

Tuesday 4-1-08 - I had a lot of grocery shopping to do this morning so I started off my shopping by myself. I got a nice, early start to the day and left the house by 8:30 which made me feel like I accomplished something great! It's the little things...you know?! First I went to Centerpointe supermarket to buy some canned tomatoes, check out their squash selection (there was none) and look at the cucumbers (a little over-priced but not a bad deal if there were none at the market). Then, I walked about 10 minutes down to Healthwise pharmacy. Our neighbor, Tony, is a doctor at the hospital and told me that I needed to get an antibiotic for the infection on Melia's finger. So, I went and bought that - it wasn't too expensive - about \$13 for a bottle of it. Then, I headed further down the road to Fung Kwei Chinese shop to check the price of a big spotlight flashlight for Aaron for his birthday. They didn't have any and the most powerful flashlight they had was \$27. It was kind of funny but the "floor model's" batteries were dying so you couldn't even tell how bright it really was. Forget that option - I decided to pursue something else! I stopped by another store to try and see my friend Lissie but she wasn't working that day. Then, I walked back to the truck and headed to the market for a number of things on my list. I bought bananas, white bone cabbage, cucumbers (I'm making pickles this week), papaya and avocados. And since I had all that produce I decided to go drop it off at home since I didn't want it sitting in the hot car all morning. Since the day was nice, I also picked up Kaela at home and took her with to shop at Nambatu supermarket. Of course, I made her recite my two hard and fast rules 3 different times before going in the store! It worked! Let's hear it for 1) no whining and crying, and 2) no begging for candy!

Wednesday 4-2-08 - Aaron and I spent all yesterday evening moving things around in our house and again this morning. The bug man came to spray this morning so we had to move all our furniture away from the walls and put stuff away in the kitchen and bathrooms. It was quite a task to get ready for! I worked on some last minute prep for that while Aaron dropped Kaela off at school. As soon as the bug man came Aaron, Melia and I vacated the house because of the strong smell and spent the morning at Eric and Shawnda's house. It was nice to have somewhere to go to relax while we waited. At lunch time the house still reeked so I took all our lunch stuff over to E&S's house and we "picnicked" at their house! Kaela thought that was lots of fun and a nice change from the norm! Thankfully, we opted to not have the man spray the girl's rooms and we closed their doors and left their fans on and there wasn't any smell at all in their rooms so they could nap in them. That was good!

I spent the rest of the afternoon and evening cleaning up that mess! Ann was supposed to come over this morning (when I told her was most convenient for me) to work on an application for work. However, she showed up about 2pm and ended up staying until 6:30pm. That's one of those Ni-Van customs that takes some getting used to! The come for

a “short visit” and then stay the rest of the afternoon and for dinner! I had a really hard time with that at first but I am getting more used to it. It also helps that I know Ann really well and I didn’t let her being there deter me from my work. I knew she mostly just wanted to hang out so she sat in the kitchen while I washed dishes, cleaned up and made dinner. Actually, I should say I re-heated dinner. I had planned for leftovers for dinner. Carefully planned because I had just enough for Aaron, Kaela and I. However, when 5pm came and Ann didn’t seem ready to leave I went ahead and asked her to stay for dinner. Then, I ended up doing my best to split a meal for 2 adults and 1 child between 3 adults and 1 child! Thankfully I had made extra rice so it all worked out okay in the end, so I was glad for that.

Friday 4-4-08 - Well, my neighbor, Rhonda, came to me this week and asked if Fiona would like some extra work. I talked with Fiona and she agreed that she would be glad to go work at Rhonda’s house to earn some extra money. Fiona comes and helps Shawnda and I out at our houses 3 days a week. With Shawnda gone she’s really only been coming two half-days a week for me so she is definitely glad for the extra money. The funny thing is that Fiona going to work for Rhonda is quite the eye-opening experience for her! With us and the Brandell’s we all like a clean house but we do a lot of things differently (housekeeping wise) here than we would do in the States because this is Vanuatu and no one really cares that much. We all live and work in the villages and a little dirt doesn’t bother us. It’s just part of our life. However, Rhonda and Dr. Tony, live as though they are still in New Zealand. Which, I guess they can because they can afford to and all their friends are of the ex-Patriot community. Anyway, I know it’s just part of Rhonda’s personality (and probably because she is married to a Dr.) but she is VERY, I mean VERY germ conscience! And she doesn’t like housework so she has three different house girls that work to keep her house running. They sweep and mop every day, wash dishes with boiled water, iron, etc. etc. etc. A lot of what she does doesn’t really surprise me that much - I don’t do things the same way - but, I’m not surprised because I grew up in a very “germ conscience” America! However, Fiona is constantly amazed with how different our lifestyles are! In a way this is good because we, as missionaries, know that our lifestyle here is very different from the other ex-Pats. But, you can’t explain that to the local Ni-Vans. But, Fiona is seeing firsthand that things are very different for us than for Dr. Tony and Rhonda’s family! She came back the other day and goes, (in English translation) “Cindy, you all do some things in ‘style blong Blackman’ but, they are ‘whiteman every one!’” Which, if you didn’t catch it was, that we do a lot of things like the locals (because we live and work with the locals and most of our friends are locals) however, their family does everything like the “white man”! Fiona finds it very funny and frankly, I do too!

Sunday 4-6-08 - I don’t think I mentioned it but, Fiona and I went to visit Leila again on Monday. Leila (who I dearly love) hasn’t been coming to worship for a few months now but, consistently offers excuses for why she hasn’t been coming. Individually all her reasons might seem...reasonable. However, taken as a whole, week after week it becomes very clear that all they are is excuses. How does that Acapella “Excuses” song go?... “the devil he’ll supply them if the church you stay away”. So true! He is actively supplying them and Leila is taking the bait! So frustrating and saddening and a million other emotions! Anyway, Fiona, Mike, Aaron and I have all tried visiting Leila and encouraging her on several occasions. Last week I went to visit her and she said she would come this past Sunday. However, Sunday rolled around and she had another excuse to offer Fiona and I when we

went to visit her. It was to be our last effort at trying to pull her to come. Leila told us to our faces, "I promise! I promise to come next Sunday". But, I've heard those kind of promises before and realistically I couldn't put much faith in them. I only could hope for it. All that to say, that she didn't come again on Sunday and it makes us all so sad. But, you can only visit and encourage and urge someone so much! It has to be her decision now. We have all tried and tried and done all we can do and she still won't come. All we can do now is pray for her and hope that one day she will see her spiritual need and come back to the Church.

Monday 4-7-08 - We had huge thunderstorms here last night. The wind really picked up Sunday evening and then came the rain sometime in the middle of the night. Boy was it windy! The rain was so loud on our metal roof that Kaela woke up scared. After I got her calmed down and back to bed I peeked out our curtain and the trees in our front yard were really whipping around! It took me about an hour to settle down and get back to sleep. It's kind of crazy but whenever I'm tossing and turning at night because I can't sleep - all I have to do is switch around and put my head at the end of the bed and feet at the head of the bed and I can get right to sleep. I'm not sure if that's normal or not. Probably not. I'm not your normal, average kind of girl! The good news is that with all the rain and wind last night and today, the temp has been very agreeable!

Aaron and I went to town this morning for a coffee date and to run a few errands and greatly enjoyed our cappuccinos and apple croissants (I can't believe I just spelled that right on the first try! Ha!) without sweating! We did, however, get very damp and muddy from walking around town in the mud and rain. No harm done, though. We came back home (Fiona was watching Melia) and did a few work items before it was time to head out and pick up Kaela from school.

Tuesday 4-8-08 - I did my grocery shopping today. I had to add a little more birthday shopping for Aaron in the mix, but I finally got it all done. I ended up showing Kaela and Fiona what I got Aaron and then I had to give Kaela the low-down on how to keep it a secret until his birthday! Surprisingly, she does pretty well with secrets like that!

Friday 4-11-08 - We picked Ann and Jonathon (her son) up last night and brought them to Eric and Shawnda's house. Ann has a bunch of family coming into town and they needed her room to sleep in so she had to find somewhere else to stay. We got her set up and then took the girls home and got them ready for bed. Oh! - I almost forgot! Last night was also quite the night for messes at dinner time. As soon as I sat down at the table and got started feeding Melia, she grabbed my very FULL glass of water and dumped the whole thing over! Aaron and I got that all cleaned up. Then, I decided to start making Kaela's taco before Aaron got back to the table to pray. Unfortunately, I didn't noticed that the handle for the refried beans was too close to Aaron's very FULL glass of tea and WOOPS! I knocked over the glass...right into Kaela's lap! And it wasn't room temp tea with ice cubes - it was ice cold, fresh from the fridge tea! She immediately screamed and started crying and all I could do was a pitiful mixture of feeling sorry for the poor girl and giggling myself to pieces over the whole event!

Today was Kaela's last day of school - the end of the first term. Man, it went fast! She has a two week break and then starts again on April 30th. I am excited to have some more time with her at home for a little while. That will be nice!

This morning Aaron, Melia, and I ran errands in town, after dropping Kaela off at

school. Then, when I got home I got my fresh brine for my pickles made. I have had a jar of pickles “making” for the last week and a half and I tasted one and they are GREAT! I am so happy! It was my first time ever to make pickles and I am so glad they turned out good! Then, Fiona and I went over to Shawnda’s house to move furniture and make everything ready for the bug man to come spray on Monday morning. By the time we did all that, it was time to pick Kaela up from school again. Time really flies during the time she is in school! It’s crazy how fast the morning goes and then we are off to go pick her up again!

Mike is coming over for dinner tonight. We also invited Luke, who is the Dad of Kaela’s friends Shiloh and Mariah. His wife, Ricci and the two girls left last week for the US because Ricci is going to have a baby so he is here by himself until July (when she is due). So, we invited him to come eat hamburgers with us tonight.

Monday 4-14-08 - Today marks three years of living in Vanuatu for our mission team! How quickly the time has gone! I remember at one time feeling like we were never going to hit the one year mark and then all of a sudden three years have come and went and I have no idea where they have gone! Looking back, we’ve seen a lot of changes in the last three years. We’ve had many good times and a few not-so-good times. To our surprise, we’ve met and made many new friends not only from Vanuatu but also from New Zealand, Australia and even from the US! People we would never have had the privilege of coming into contact with had we not been working in Vanuatu! As a family and as individuals we seem to have grown and changed, as well. I guess that is only to be expected when you put yourself in another culture that is so very different from your own and then strive to become a part of this new culture as best as you can. All in all, these last three years have been a great blessing to Aaron and I and we wouldn’t have traded them for the world! Only God knows what our future holds and we look forward to finding out just what His perfect will has in store for us in the coming years!

Thursday 4-17-08 - Wow! This week has flown by! I have spent much of this week preparing for Aaron’s birthday! He’s hitting the big 30 tomorrow and I want to make it a really special day for him! Weather permitting, we are hoping to squirrel away some time to ourselves and go snorkeling tomorrow morning at Hideaway Island. However, a rain storm rolled in yesterday afternoon and things have been overcast all day with the definite promise of holding over for the weekend! So, our plans may change and as of now we don’t have a definite “rain-option” decided on! Kaela is on school break this week and next and I am really enjoying having her around during the day! She’s just a barrel of fun to spend time with (excluding all 3 year old disciplinary-related moments!) and I am glad for the time we have to spend together.

I was scheduled to try and study with Josephine again this Wednesday. At least she said she would call if she would be able to study. However, I still haven’t heard from her and am not all that surprised. Usually, an “I’ll call you if I can” really translates as “I probably won’t call so don’t change your whole day around to expect it.” That isn’t cynicism talking - it’s just the reality of the culture. I find that I am a much more agreeable, “go with the flow” person if I don’t waste time waiting on people to show up, but rather go about my business and continue on with my day as usual. If they choose to show up for a study or visit or whatever - then it’s like a nice bonus!

Also, this week I am working on a plan to start an older kids Bible class on Sunday mornings. I have three kids in my current class that I can tell are getting a bit bored with the

class. I have an idea it is because we teach at about a first grade level because that is the age range that the majority of kids fall (with a few older and a few younger). Anyway, I looking to start a new class just for the older ones and encourage them to become more familiar with using their Bibles, making Godly choices in their social lives and also the meaning behind different aspects of Christianity. Hopefully, I'll have that class ready to begin next week or possibly the first of May.

Sunday 4-20-08 - Well, I am a couple days late with my update, but Aaron's birthday was wonderful! We woke up to somewhat overcast skies but, we decided to try and go to Hideaway Island and snorkel anyway. Kaela, Melia, Aaron and I did presents for him this morning. (Mostly because with some of our local friends coming to dinner that night I didn't want them to see everything I got him for his birthday - not that I was extravagant...just more than they are used to, I am sure). I got him a box of 24 Cokes that he was quite excited about - I know that may seem like small beans to us Americans but here a 24-pack of Coke runs about \$26 so we don't buy Coke too often. I also made him a DVD movie of our life together and our family that I am rather proud of! I'm not great at "computer stuff" so I was really feeling proud of myself that I figured out how to make a movie, download pictures and music into it and burn it on CD all by myself...well, with maybe a *little* outside help! I also got him a t-shirt (actually Kaela picked it out so it was her gift to him) and some shorts to wear to Ambae when he goes next month. Anyway, after presents, we had breakfast, left Melia with Fiona, took Kaela to play with her friends down the road, and headed to Hideaway. The weather was perfect for our little excursion! It slightly overcast but we did get a little sun when we were snorkeling, which was nice. Then we laid on the beach and read our books and chatted occasionally, had lunch on the island, walked around it in about 20 minutes (it's a small island that only contains a resort) and then headed home at 12:30pm. We arrived just in time for me to feed Melia, Aaron to pick Kaela up and get them both down for naps. Then that evening we had Flexon, Fiona, Mike and Ann all over for dinner and cake - it was a fun time! So, that was Friday.

Saturday whizzed by so fast I can hardly remember what we did. Aaron and Mike cut grass at the church building. I did housework in the morning and took care of Melia while Kaela played. Then we had lunch together, spent some family time together, put the girls down for naps, went to the grocery, had dinner and before we knew it was time to get them ready for bed! Why is it that Saturdays go so fast?!

It has been heavy on my heart for some time now the fellowship and relationships of the local Christians. As a team, we know there isn't enough fellowshiping going on outside or worship, but when fellowships are scheduled (be they for the women or the whole congregation) we can't get people to come! And we've tried everything we can think of to make it more appealing and convenient and not a financial strain on the Christians. I have always felt like that if the local Christians would get to know each other really well they would really want to spend time together and make more of an effort to come to activities outside of worship. But, they aren't making an effort and we have come to a bit of a brick wall in figuring out what to do about this. I've been praying about this problem a lot and today I came up with a great idea for getting the Christians to spend more time together. Put very simply: when you set a time for a fellowship people don't come. But, when you personally invite someone to dinner they always come. So, I've decided to start holding small "unofficial fellowships" at our house. Invite a few people at a time to come eat with us and help them to get to know each other better, outside of worship. Maybe that will get people talking and

wanting to spend more time together. I've set my first one for Monday the 28th and I've invited Claude and Rosemary, Ann, and Mabel to come. Let's hope and pray my plan succeeds!

Thursday 4-24-08 - I am having just the hardest time getting around to journaling! It is so hard to keep up with sometimes! Oh well, life goes on.... I've been putting much of my time this week into working on my "bigfala pikinini" Sunday school class. That has been difficult since Fiona couldn't come this week due to having a bad toothache and having to go wait hours at the dentist three different days just to get her tooth cleaned out and filled. But, I am getting so excited about my class and preparation for it has been kind of fun!

Tuesday 4-29-08 - Last night was our first ever "small" fellowship! I invited Claude & Rosemary, Ann & Jonathon (a baby), and Mabel. It went great! Interestingly, we had 125% attendance because we invited 4 adults and 5 came! Did I do that percentage right??? Math isn't my strong suit - give me English any day! Ha. Anyway, Claude and Rosemary also brought Eddie, Rosemary's grandfather and one of the Christians from Eton village. Straight with "island time" I told everyone to be at our house at 5pm and the first people arrived at 5:30 and the last one at 6pm. Thankfully, I am getting used to this "time isn't a big deal" way of life and I had all my prep work done for dinner ahead of time and didn't have Aaron start grilling until the first people arrived. All in all, it was a good time and there was some really good conversation! Everyone headed home at about 8pm.

I've been spending today working on my Bible class for the next couple weeks (my upcoming lessons are Jesus as the Cornerstone of our lives and Why do we come to church?), doing housework, hanging laundry, looking after Kaela (who goes back to school tomorrow) and Melia, checking emails, getting my journal updated and excerpts ready for Mission Vanuatu Minutes and other such exciting tasks!