

From ^O_R Point ^O_F View

the Ladies of Mission Vanuatu

Tuesday 7-1-08 - Okay, I'm giving another push to do my journaling on a regular basis. Sometimes I really struggle to get it done, as you well know, if you keep up with that part of my life! Anyway, I had a good day today. I left for town to do my shopping at about 8:15, a record! I had a couple of gifts to buy that I want to send back to the US with Shawnda's parents and have them mail. Plus, I also needed a few grocery items from Centerpointe supermarket. After I finished my shopping I headed to Seafront Park for some "quiet time". I've been trying to do that lately....go to the park and spend some quiet time thinking and praying and getting myself focused for the week. It seems like doing that at home is so difficult! There is always kids making noise, or Aaron needing something or that basket of laundry staring at me, begging to be put away! Getting out of the house really helps me to focus! Sometimes I enjoy a coffee while I'm doing that but, my stomach is in upheaval today so I decided to forego the coffee!

After that I headed back home, dropped off my purchases, picked up Kaela and went to finish my grocery shopping at Bon Marche supermarket. I don't normally take Kaela with me, but she is on school break for three weeks and she LOVES going to the store with me. So, I let her come and it is a good time for us to spend together just the two of us. Melia stays at home with Fiona, who comes to help out on Tuesday mornings. Of course, going to the store means that Kaela has to recite my two hard and fast rules: No whining and no begging!

Friday 7-4-08 - Happy Independence Day! The guys (Aaron, Mike, Eric and Mike Gray - Shawnda's Dad) left at 5:15am this morning to go deep sea fishing. Mike Gray wanted to go very, very badly and after much difficulty in securing a boat to take them - he finally got one set up to leave this morning at 5:15. All the boys were very excited to do some deep sea fishing, however, much to their dismay, Mike and Eric spent the day with their heads over the side of the boat "feeding the fish"! According to Aaron and Mike G.s report they were both very sea sick! Despite all that drama, 31 fish were caught and many of them were HUGE! The best part for Aaron was when he hooked a marlin that was approx. five feet! All the guys were pretty excited to see it. Unfortunately, it put up a pretty good fight and broke the line and got away. Aaron sure was excited about it though!

We girls took the kids to Erakor island to play in the sand (since Kaela and Titus are afraid of the water) and we had a fun time too. We aimed to leave the house at 10:30am and made it out by 11:30! Just about right for three adults and four kids! We had a lovely lunch and play time at Erakor and made it home just in time for nap time.

For our July 4th dinner we had hamburgers, grilled tuna (freshly caught by the guys) and strawberry shortcake for dessert. Then, we decided to go spread some 4th of July cheer to our American neighbors. So, we got a bunch of glow sticks that Shawnda's mom brought and went "caroling" next door! Do you call it caroling when you aren't singing Christmas songs? We sang the Star Spangled Banner and God Bless America. It was a nice time and rather moving for all of us who are so far from home!

Saturday 7-5-08 - Mike and Nancy left today. We sure will miss having them around! It was a real joy to have them here!

WE had a ladies fellowship at 1pm today. Shawnda taught the ladies how to make homemade pizza using basic ingredients. We only had two ladies come. We had hoped for more, but it was kind of one of those get togethers that we labeled "if you want to learn it, come - if not, we'll see you Sunday". Even though there was only four of us we still had a good time together and that is what is important!

Sunday 7-6-08 - We had very good attendance at worship this morning, as well as, for the fellowship meal afterwards. Fiona and I went earlier in the week this week and purchased plates, cups, bowls and silverware for the church to use for fellowship meals. It will be so nice to just do the dishes at the building after we eat and be done with it. Previously, Shawnda and I had to take our own stock of dishes and we brought everything back home to wash at our houses. That was a bit of a pain. Of course, our method of washing the plates was somewhat different than you might imagine, since we have no kitchen sink at the building. We ran water from the spigot outside into a plastic wash tub, washed the dishes in the cold water, drained them in a plastic draining basket and then dried them and put them away to use next month. Different from our usual method in the States, but it works for Vanuatu!

Sunday 7-13-08 - Sunday again, and I'm just now writing...I guess I'll try and re-cap the week. This is the second week of Kaela's school break and already she is anxious to get back and see her friends! I spent all of Monday doing housework (which takes forever with both Kaela and Melia "underfoot") but I got it all done and felt so much better about myself when I was through. I did truly exciting things like sweeping, making beds, putting away clothes, picking up toys and general clutter, doing dishes, washing and hanging clothes to dry, cleaning the toilet. Fun. Fun. Actually, I don't mind doing housework. I kind of like it...except for cleaning the toilet and shower room...that's not much fun...more like necessary evils! Ha! Aaron and I have been trying to teach Kaela the value of money. So, we gave her three old peanut butter jars and labeled them for saving, spending and giving to God. We find jobs for her around the house and she earns a little money to put in her jars. So, Monday I set her to work washing down all our lower cabinet doors in the kitchen and bathroom and I gave her 40vatu for her work. She was to put one 10vatu coin in each jar and the last coin she could choose where she wanted to put it...of course she chose her "spending" jar. On Tuesday I did my grocery shopping. That took me all morning. I did a little pre-shopping for some random things we needed in town, squirreled away 30 minutes for a coffee date with Aaron (woo-hoo!) and then headed home to drop off my bags and pick up Kaela for our "big" supermarket run. She and I did that as quickly as possible then we came home and Fiona (who was watching Melia) and I made lunch for our family plus her and Tom (who is doing yard work and odd jobs for us and the Brandells with week. It's a great help to us when he comes to work for us and it gives his family some much-needed income since he doesn't have steady work.

On Wednesday Shawnda and Rhonda took their kids and Kaela to play group. I used the valuable time when I was minus one kid to do some needed computer work and a few things around the house. Then on Thursday, Aaron and I finalized our plans for Kaela's birthday on Saturday and we did our Tues/Thurs schedule since Aaron and Eric had TBS class to teach that night. Our Tues/Thurs schedule goes as follows...Right after Kaela gets up from her nap Aaron gets her in the shower while I make dinner (about 4pm). Then, we

have an early dinner and Aaron gets his stuff together for his class while I clean up the kitchen and get the girls ready to go to Shawnda's house, Kaela and I read her Bible story and she sings with Aaron so she is very nearly ready for bed. At 6pm the girls and I head over to Shawnda's house (this time with a basket full of clean clothes waiting to be folded) and get settled in. Aaron leaves for class between 6:15 and 6:30. Mike comes to the house from 6:30 to 7:30 to be with us (for safety and our mental security). At Shawnda's house Kaela and Titus watch the Backyardigans or some other TV show while Shawnda and I take turns holding the babies and refereeing Kaela and Titus. It's a fun time even if it is a little chaotic at times! Then, Eric comes home at 7:30, I got home, get the girls to bed and then spend the next hour or so working on my computer and then I usually watch a movie for the last hour before Aaron gets home between 10:00-10:30. It makes for a long night for us, but that is just the way it is while TBS is going on.

Friday morning we got up early and got ready to go to take Kaela to Blue Water Resort so she could go swim in the "solwota"...(saltwater). This was going to be her fun birthday activity. Of course, by the time our family and the Brandells and Fiona were ready to load in the truck it started raining pretty good! But, we just covered our beach bags with garbage bags and headed out anyway! Blue Water is far enough out of town that it had quit raining by the time we arrived. The kids played in the sand and the water and then we had lunch at the restaurant (of sorts). It was a really fun time away from Vila. The good thing is that Aaron and I know the owner pretty well (we've stayed there before a couple of times and his son is in Kaela's class at school) so we were able to go out for the day without having to pay the day fee of \$10 per person.

Saturday. I have finally made it to Saturday! Yea! Sometimes these "catch-up" updates take forever! So, Saturday was the 12th...Kaela's 4th Birthday! A big day for our family! Aaron and I decorated the table and her door and her chair all up and set out a few presents for her to open that morning. So, she was VERY excited about all that when she first got up! In fact, she had been awake 15 minutes and declared that she "loved being 4!" Ha! I guess the first 15 minutes were just exceptional! We had her favorite breakfast of coffee cake and she spent the morning playing with a few new toys and also playing with Titus. Melia and I hung out at our house and baked Kaela's birthday cake. It was a strawberry cake with pink frosting. Everything pink! Go figure! Incidentally it was a Betty Crocker mix cake that I got at our grocery store. They had imported it and we were able to buy it for the bargain price of approx. \$5.50. What a deal! I made it into a three tiered cake and decorated it with some Disney Princess figurines (that I had to "borrow" from Kaela) and sprinkles. I was pretty excited about my first efforts at making a fancy layer cake! After, her afternoon nap, we started getting ready for dinner. I decorated at Shawnda's house (where we would eat that night) while both of the girls were sleeping and spent all afternoon getting ready for her little party that night. Mike came over for dinner too and we had grilled chicken wings (Kaela's number one choice!), mashed potatoes and corn. Pretty tasty! Normally Kaela can put away 2-3 large chicken wings however, tonight she was just so excited about the prospect of seeing her surprise pink cake that we could barely get her to eat one! Anyway, she LOVED her cake which made me very, very happy and she was very excited about all of her presents! All in all it was a really fun night and I can't believe our little girl has already turned four! She is getting so big!

Tuesday 7-15-08 - Today was grocery day for me. I used to do it on Mondays but then once Kaela started to school it seems to work better for me to do it on Tuesdays. So, there you go! I headed to town about 8:30 this morning and went to buy diapers for Melia first thing. I get a 38-pack of Binbin Bebe diapers for about \$12. Then, I headed to the Nambawan Café for a

coffee. When I can fit it in (if my morning of shopping isn't too packed) I try to go there for a coffee and some devotional time. It's this nice outdoor café with a great view and very reasonable prices for their coffee. I usually take some paper and a pen so I can write down the things that I want to reflect on and pray about. It is a great time for me to get away from the house and the kids and just spend some time praying and thinking about things I want to improve about myself or things I have been worried about in my life. I always leave feeling so refreshed and more "centered". I'm not sure if that makes sense to anyone but me.

After I did that I headed to Centerpointe Supermarket for a few needed items and then home again to drop off my shopping and pick up Kaela. If the day is nice (not bad weather) I usually take Kaela with me to the store. She loves to go and it is a good time where she and I can spend time together with it just being the two of us. I think it makes her feel important to help me with the grocery shopping! So, then we did the rest of our grocery shopping at Nambatu supermarket. This week they had gotten in some GREAT products from the US! They carry very few items from our part of the world. Today I found snack size bags of Oreos and I about cried I was so happy! Shawnda and I have missed Oreos so much and we have tried every cookie that looks on the package like they could be Oreos but haven't had any luck finding any that are even remotely the same. I was so happy to see them that I bought three bags (one for me, Aaron and Shawnda). Yum! I found several other things that came from the US - graham crackers, Kix, Cheerios, Honey Bunches of Oats (none of which I bought) but I was so delighted to find them that I just kept laughing every time I saw something familiar and I am SURE that people thought I was nuts! But, I don't care! It was like a little "reminder" of home and I was just happy about it! So there! Ha!

Thursday 7-17-08 - Happy Birthday to Jill (my sister)...only it's here birthday here in Vanuatu today but, not her birthday in the US until tomorrow...does that make sense? Today Shawnda, Fiona and I took all the kids to the doctor for vaccines (Kaela was the only one that wasn't requiring any vaccines). However, the doctor was out of the vaccines that Titus needed and the one that Melia was due for so, it was a "short" trip to his office. We left there and then headed to town to Healthwise Pharmacy to buy the vaccine that Melia needed and then went back to the doctor so he could give it to her. Titus ended up not getting any vaccines at all today because the Pharmacy only had one Pnuemococcal in stock and Shawnda let me have it for Melia since it was the only one she needed. What a crazy deal it is here! The same thing happened when I went to get Melia her last Pnuemococcal vaccine last time! The doctor was out, I walked in the rain all the way to town to the Drug Store - they were out, then walked all the way to Healthwise (where I bought the last one they had). Oh, well. That's Vanuatu for you and what are you gonna do about it? That pretty much filled up my morning and before you know it, it was time to make lunch. I had hoped that we could do a family picnic lunch at the park but it keeps raining off and on so I scratched that idea and we had a regular lunch at home instead. Maybe tomorrow...or next week. While the girls slept this afternoon I put on a movie and spent my time altering some clothes. I had a skirt that was too big that needed taken in (that's always a nice problem) and Kaela had two pairs of school shorts that I needed to adjust the fit before school starts again next week! I was finally glad to get all that done!

Tuesday 7-22-08 - I think all my entries as of late are being made on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I guess that's because it is the most convenient time I have to type on my computer. Today was grocery day again. It seems to come around so quickly! Things went pretty well, although, Kaela has been unusually whiny today and I've had to deal with that all morning. She starts back to school tomorrow and I know she is just SO excited to be going

back! Yesterday morning Aaron watched Melia and we had a “Mommy and Kaela date”. I took her to go get a chocolate milkshake (which she thought was just the best thing ever!) and then to read books in the park. We had great weather for our outing and a super-fun time together!

I’ve been on this Scrabble kick lately. Sometimes I just get on these kicks and lately it Scrabble! I can’t be enough! Aaron is NOT a Scrabble fan - he says it puts him to sleep - so I’ve taken to playing games with two players...me against myself. How sad is that?! Actually, he felt so sorry for me last night that he willingly played a game (and beat me!) with me and I was so happy to have a partner that I could converse with! I would really love to have one of those Deluxe Scrabble game that are on a turn table and have the plastic “dividers” that keep the tiles from moving. However, I don’t guess that is too practical when I’m the only one that likes to play!

Tonight (after I finish this entry) I plan to work on my next edition of Yumi Oi Mama. I’m writing an article about how we, as wives, can’t have the attitude and way of thinking that when things aren’t going well in our marriages that we’ll just leave and go find a different man. That is an all too popular notion in Vanuatu (both outside - and sadly - inside the church). Hopefully, my article will shed some encouragement and some needed “strong tok” on the subject.

Tuesday 7-29-08 - Wow. Tuesday *again*! How does that happen? Oh well. I think I say that every week. The last three days have been unseasonably humid and thankfully the big rainstorm that was brewing finally arrived and the weather has cooled back down to normal July temperatures. I was beginning to think our cool season was ending two months early and my entire being was screaming “NO! NO! It isn’t time yet!” That might sound a bit dramatic, but I really do dread the arrival of the hot season...the stickiness, the sweat, the feeling that you always need a shower, the fatigue...I could go on but, complaining about it doesn’t make time go slower. So, I’d best just stick a cork in it and move on with life (and this journal entry)!

Things have been kind of crazy here as of late. On Sunday Fiona wasn’t at worship and after talking with Flexon we realized that she had had a seizure during the night. We were all very concerned about this so we drove out to her house to take her some food and to try and convince them that she needed to go get checked at the hospital. To make a VERY long story short, thanks to our Doctor friend and neighbor she was admitted to the hospital on Sunday night for observation. That turned out to be a long evening. Aaron had spent a large part of the day dealing with various issues at Etas (negligent Christians, a Bible study that was scheduled but never happened, and various other frustrations). He was so dejected by the time we went to bed on Sunday night - he declared that he was turning his phone off and taking Monday off! Ha! Jokes on him! At 6am (about 15 minutes before we needed to get up) his phone rang (he didn’t turn it off early enough, I guess) and some of the Christians from Ambae had arrived in town on the ship. So, they called Aaron to come get them and take them to their relatives house where they would be staying. Nevermind that everyone on the ship had to hop a bus to get where they were going - they called Aaron the on-call 24 hour missionary. Do I sound perturbed about that? Well, we were. I know that probably isn’t the right attitude...okay, it so is NOT the right attitude. But, sometimes we really wonder if people actually like us of it they just like how convenient we are. Does that make sense? Anyway, when he went down to pick them up it turned out that the boat was just arriving at shore and still had to dock and unload (so he could have gotten the extra sleep anyway). He ended up not making it home in time to take Kaela to school so I had to run next door and ask Shawnda if we could hitch a ride with her on her way to the grocery store.

I spent the rest of the day running back and forth to the hospital, which thankfully, is just a three minute walk down the road. Fiona wasn't doing well at all in the afternoon and I was really worried about her. But, after a good talking to by the nurse, myself and her uncle (who came to stay with her) she started drinking water and was feeling much better by evening. The short list of incompetence of the local hospital (I.e. leaving undocumented, unnecessary meds at her bedside, laziness in trying to diagnose her problem, never giving results of blood tests, etc. etc. etc.) - And I hope and pray I NEVER have to be admitted to that place! It's scary being friends with the doctor from New Zealand because he has told us all kinds of frightening things related to the local hospital - mostly related to either lack of education or laziness. Yikes!

Anyway, with Fiona out sick, I juggled my grocery day around with Aaron's help. She ended up being able to go home this morning and I was glad for her for that. Aaron and I took the girls to this new food supply warehouse that has a bunch of American products in stock and the prices are wonderful! I'm not sure why they are so cheap but I bought several canned goods and sugar for much cheaper than I can get them at any grocery store. That was great! Then I came home, dropped off my stuff and Kaela and I went to Bon Marche to do some more grocery shopping while Aaron stayed with Melia. It took me over an hour in that store because it was a ZOO! Tomorrow is Vanuatu's Independence and so everyone was getting in their shopping for various celebrations. The most celebrating we have planned is to play cards with the Brandells after the kids go to bed. Woo-hoo! Not big excitement, but fun nonetheless!

This is Aaron and Eric's last week for TBS classes. This term has been a struggle for them attendance wise and I think they are both glad it is coming to an end. Although, Shawnda did make a good point in that while Eric's class on how to prepare to preach or teach is a great class that is much needed - if someone doesn't have an interest in teaching or preaching they won't bother to take the class. I expect attendance will be back up for the last term of the year (starting in October) when one of the classes will be Denomination Doctrines (which everyone is curious about).

Wednesday 07.30.08 - So, today was Vanuatu's Independence Day. It turned out to be a very nice, relaxing day for our family to spend together. Kaela got a bug catcher in the mail from some of her friends in the US, so we spent a good portion of the day looking for spider and bugs to feed to our chicken, Cinderella. We just spend some great family time together talking and going for a walk and then had dinner (a sort of celebration) with the mission team. After dinner the kids played for a while then we came home and gave our kids baths and got them ready for bed. Then, we went back to Eric and Shawnda's house and put them to bed there. Kaela thinks it is a real treat to get to go to sleep at their house and I'm trying to get Melia used to sleeping somewhere other than her bed. Shawnda has a little portable bed that we put in the kitchen (since it has a door to close it off as a separate room) and we laid Melia down there. The girls went to sleep really well and then we adults played cards for an hour or so. It was a fun time to just spend as our "core" mission team. It has been a long time since we have just spent time together as just adults. Mike left after our card game was over and then Eric and Shawnda and Aaron and I all played Scattergories for a while. It was just an all around fun night! Several times I laughed so hard I thought my sides would split! Everyone needs a good laugh like that once in a while! Afterwards, we picked up our sleepy girls and put them to bed at our house and finally made it to bed ourselves at about 11pm.

Thursday 7.31.08 - That's the things about going to bed so late...it sure was hard to wake up this morning! We had a fun time last night and I almost was sorry to have to go to bed but,

then I woke up the next morning why I didn't just turn in earlier! Oh, well. That only happens once in a while so I guess I'll live. I took a good nap this afternoon to revive myself.

I had some last minute grocery shopping to do today, so I hitched a ride with Eric and Shawnda. Kaela went with me and Melia stayed home with Aaron. Vanuatu is still celebrating Independence so even though stores were open today, there were very few people in town. I tried to buy some popcorn kernels but there wasn't a lick to be found! I guess I'll pass on those until the next shipment comes in...whenever that will be. We spent today in our normal Thursday fashion. Tonight is the last night of TBS classes for term 3, so Aaron left for class at 6pm, I went and spent an hour at Shawnda's until Eric came home and then we came home and I put Kaela to bed because she has school tomorrow.