



Brandell e-Scr@pbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



By now we hope you have all had a Merry Christmas and your New Year has started off with a bang! December is always a relatively slow month work-wise, so we were glad to get to spend some time working on our house in Malekula and spending time together with family and friends.

The end of the year always causes us to reflect upon all that has happened in the past 12 months. We are humbled and grateful for the way in which God has used our many supporters, financial or otherwise, to furnish our every need. Thank you for a great year!

In this month's issue:

-  Malekula House
-  Changes for 2011
-  Christmas in Vanuatu

MALEKULA HOUSE

With the completion of the Trutok Baebol Skul term in Epau Village, I was freed up to once again travel to Malekula to work on our house. The new year was fast approaching and we still had lots to do in order to get our house ready to be lived in.

In what turned out to be a great decision, I took a young Christian from Epau with me to assist. Willy has some prior construction experience, and proved to be an invaluable assistant. We were able to

From the home-front...

You'd think we'd be used to the hot, humid Christmases we experience here...but I'm not! It still feels weird to be listening to "Let It Snow," putting up our snowmen decorations, opening presents while sweating, and going for a Christmas swim instead of building a snowman. We miss our family and friends most at this time of year when we know they are all celebrating together.

This was the first year that Titus and Lexi were able to help decorate the tree and they loved it! Of course, all of the ornaments they hung were right up front and at the bottom...I was afraid the tree was going to topple over, so we had to do a little rearranging. But, I tried to leave most where they placed them. They were so proud!

This month started out with a great ladies fellowship in Eton where we sang, ate, watched the Etas ladies perform a skit that they wrote about the gospel coming to Vanuatu, and having a gift exchange. I love being with these women...it is always such an encouragement to share these times of laughter and camaraderie.

While Eric was gone for a week in December, the kids and I enjoyed a couple of outings and lots of playing, stories, school time, & Christmas shopping. We always miss him so much while he's gone, but are excited that we will be traveling with him from now on. Here comes 2011! We pray that it'll be a year of growth for the church in Vanuatu.

We love and appreciate you all...

Shawnda <<<



complete the block work on the remaining two walls, render the block walls inside and out, and install timber framing for the top half of the walls (onto which split bamboo will be attached). All that to say we got the house to a point where the local brethren will (thankfully) now take over - cutting, weaving and installing the bamboo walls and constructing a thatch veranda on the front of the house. We also installed a gutter and the water tank, as we are in the midst of the “rainy season” and need to collect as much water as possible.

We are planning to start our first official Malekula rotation on January 27, at which time we will be sending our final shipment - all our “stuff.” Please be praying that 2011 will prove to be a fruitful year, especially in light of our new focus on this outer island.



Completion of the block work



First coat of rendering



Pouring cement around the posts



Rendering in progress



The back porch, which is where we will hang our laundry to dry



Willy hard at work



View of the inside, which will be divided into two rooms by a bamboo wall



View of the front of the house



Lunch is served: Fish (bone-in!), simboro (laplap in island cabbage), rice and noodles



All 14 of these people stopped by and had to take a look at the white man's house! Ahh, the life of a celebrity.

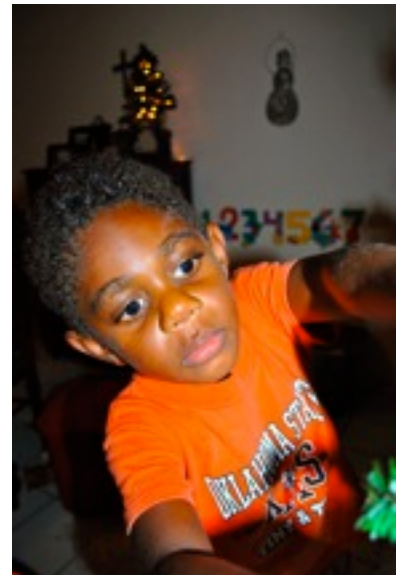


On the way to the airport, the lady in the red shirt accidentally poured unleaded instead of diesel, so we had to empty the tank and try again

CHRISTMAS IN VANUATU

What images come to mind when you hear the word “Christmas”? After six Christmases in Vanuatu, it is now things like hot, humid, BBQ and swimming for us! December is the first month of summer for us here in the southern hemisphere, so the only hope we have of experiencing a White Christmas is going to a white sandy beach. While the holiday season always makes us miss our friends and family back in the States just a little bit more than usual, we are grateful to have our teammates and ni-Vanuatu family with us.

As has become our team’s annual tradition, we gathered at our house for snacks and presents on Christmas Eve. Like any other Christmas party, the best part was enjoying the excitement through the kids. They enjoyed eating with their fingers, drinking juice boxes, sitting on the floor for dinner, taking pictures, passing out presents, opening presents, and playing with all their new toys. We all got to bed way too late, and woke up way too early the next morning to more excitement from the kids - more presents! Favorite items this year included “Big Baby” for Lexi and a “Mack truck” for Titus. Of course, they both enjoyed playing with wrapping paper, bows, ribbons and boxes as much as anything else! We gathered at the Bakers on Christmas morning for the adults to “open” our stockings full of goodies. The kids enjoyed their annual Christmas swim in the backyard wading pool, and we had Christmas dinner about 4pm - veal tenderloin, homemade rolls, carrots, roasted potatoes, and pumpkin pie. I even had a can of Dr. Pepper that I had been saving since we came back from the States in July - talk about a party! All that was missing was Uncle Mike!



The kids took tree-decorating very seriously this year, as you can tell from the intentness of their faces



In early December, we had some American friends over for dinner before they all went back to the States. Nicole was in the Peace Corps and the Richards are Bible translators. It's always refreshing to get together with people who have the same customs as you do!



Women from Vila, Etas, Eton and Epau all gather at Eton beach for their annual Christmas lunch and gift exchange



"Can we open it, can we open it!?" Christmas presents are a month-long affair when they come via the postman



Christmas lights in the park - probably the only such display in the whole country



When they get excited, Titus and Lexi wrestle - and she can certainly hold her own!



Titus proudly displaying his knowledge of numbers 1 through 10



Lexi enjoying her favorite toy at playgroup



A very-Vanuatu Santa visits playgroup



Titus is happy with his new truck ...



... and Lexi with her baby doll - imagine that!





CHANGES

Most know by now that our team will be undergoing some exciting changes in the new year. The Bakers will be moving to Tanna Island, where they will be working with Christians in and around Lorakau Village. Mike plans to focus his efforts on the islands of Santo and Ambae, where there are several Christians as well as hundreds of Bible correspondence course students. And of course we Brandells will be focusing on Malekula. Maintaining our team-based monthly report (Mission Vanuatu Minutes) would be difficult under those circumstances, so we're going to begin publishing three separate monthly reports. Our family will continue to use our e-Scrapbook, the Bakers will report under the "Mission Vanuatu Minutes" name, and Mike will continue distributing his monthly report as well. While many of you will probably receive their updates, we will be including updates from the Bakers and Mike in our reports, just to keep you up to date with them.

Additionally, our family is in the process of launching a blog that will serve as a weekly update of our time in Malekula. We hope to be able to have internet access once a week while on the island, at which time we will update our blog. Our monthly report will basically be a compilation of those weekly reports. So, you can choose to be updated weekly or monthly (or both!). You are now able to view our blog at www.missionvanuatu.blogspot.com.

Lastly, we've updated our website in an effort to make it more user friendly (and require less maintenance).