



Brandell e-Scrapbook

A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu



Our first full month in Vanuatu as a family of four was a full one. How grateful we were to have Shawnda's parents with us to help out! We hope you enjoy this month's edition...

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A NEW VEHICLE

Our vehicle search came to an end early in the month when I received a phone call from Aaron stating that he just passed a Toyota Prado with a "For Sale" sign in the window. I called the number immediately, and hurried to the location. After a test drive and a quick inspection (and of course, approval from Shawnda), I made an offer. It was accepted and we took possession of the vehicle the next day.



I am still amazed by the deal we got. It seems to me that the truck is worth thousands more than we paid for it! For days I was just waiting to find out why the price was so low. Alas, we have not had any problems, and the mechanics have performed a full-service and found no issues. Our prayers for reliable transportation have been

From the home-front...

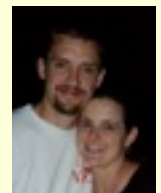
Titus continues to learn new words every day, and is learning how to more effectively communicate what he wants. We can also tell that he understands most of what we say to him. He is learning to obey, which is a huge blessing. Lexi is growing so fast and is a joy to all of us. She is cooing and laughing now. She enjoys watching Titus play and he is actually learning to be gentle with her!

I really, really enjoyed teaching the ladies at TBS for one class this term. I haven't been able to teach like that in a while. It was really encouraging.

Eric and I also celebrated our 7th anniversary this month by playing golf together & going to eat at a neat restaurant. It was nice to have a little one-on-one time to talk and enjoy each other's company.

We have had a great time with mom & dad. We are really going to miss them...their presence and help have been such a blessing. What will we do without them?

We love you
- Shawnda





graciously answered. We have already used the vehicle extensively, and it has performed very well. Another special thanks to all those who made special contributions to this effort!

WORK UPDATE



Wilson's family members at the house after the funeral

The majority of my time these days is spent preparing lessons and grading papers for the Bible school. I was able to work on a few other items this month as well, especially during our one-week break between school terms.

On a sad note, I traveled to Epau Village for the funeral of Wilson Arthur. With no embalming techniques available, bodies must be buried within a day or two of death, so I



Lexi's presence brightened everyone's spirits

had only a few hours notice. As is customary, I purchased a 5 kilogram bag

of rice and a small bouquet of silk flowers before heading for the village. Wilson was the son of Arthur and Rosie, who are like parents to me as I stay at their house each time I am in Epau. He had been sick for over two years, having never received an accurate diagnosis of his illness.



Funerals in Vanuatu are, in a word, overwhelming. Much like in Bible days, mourners express their grief through loud wailing. Standing amidst 100+ people who are wailing at the top of their lungs is indeed an overwhelming emotional experience. It is also a bit strange to us westerners, because people can literally turn their wailing on and off at will (it reminds me of those mourning the death of Jairus' daughter, who went from weeping & lamenting to laughing, in Luke 8:52-53). Vanuatu custom also dictates that special meals be held in honor of the dead and to thank all those who helped with the funeral

activities after 5 days, 1 month, 100 days, and 1 year.

I am still doing my best to translate one song per day from the English hymnal into Bislama. So far, I have completed 20. I am keying in the shape-notes, the English lyrics, and then the Bislama lyrics, doing my best to do an accurate thought-for-thought translation. My motivation for compiling this songbook is to facilitate worshipping "in spirit and truth," as many locals do not have a good understanding of the English words of our traditional hymns. I hope to have about 100 songs in the book, including some more modern "choruses" that are popular in the States. The locals have already enjoyed learning some of them (Shawnda's done most of the translating for those). It looks like it will be ready for printing in another couple of months.



We won a small victory this month regarding the Vila building project. Some funds that have been unaccessible for over a year became available, so we will be able to begin working on completing the wall/fence around the property. This will serve as a finishing touch that should really make the project look completed. The congregation also received a generous donation from Christians in New Zealand that will fully fund the tiling of the floors of the main building. I will begin focusing on these two projects once the 3rd term of the Bible School is completed, and hope to have the work finished by the time our PIBC courses take place in late August.



TRUTH BIBLE SCHOOL



Our second term finished up the second week of June. I cannot accurately express how pleased I was with the students during this, my first term to teach. I purposefully designed a very difficult final exam with 45 fill-in-the-blank questions and 6 short-essay questions. The students did an admirable job, which is always reassuring to the teacher that they all did indeed learn something in the course.

After a one-week break, we began Term 3 with me teaching "Lesson Preparation & Presentation" and Aaron teaching "New Testament Survey." It looks like we are going to have 13 full-time students, which is a slight increase over the last term. I was pleased that Shawnda was able to teach the ladies during one class period. They studied the important role women play in the church, specifically as it refers to teaching women and children. All of the ladies were very excited about their "substitute teacher," and seemed to have enjoyed the class very much.



This work continues to be a source of great encouragement for all of us, as we can see the church preparing herself for the future. Please continue praying for this work.

LADIES' FELLOWSHIP IN ETAS

Last month we began our monthly ladies fellowships again. We have all really missed them, and everyone seems to be enjoying meeting on a regular basis. This month, in addition to our regularly-scheduled Vila women's fellowship, we went to Etas Village to fellowship with the ladies there. We always enjoy going out there. They are as much an encouragement to us as we are to them. As the ladies in Vila decided, a different



woman will be responsible for "heading up" each of the fellowships. Mabel volunteered to lead the one in Etas and did a marvelous job. She asked different women to pray, and did a great job sharing a scripture and leading the singing. After our devotional time, we had some refreshments (I made pizza, which was a "hit") and visited. The most encouraging aspect of these fellowships is watching the local Christian women interact with each other and get to know each other. We know that the relationships they are building, along with their growth in faith and understanding of God's word, are what is going to keep them going strong when we're no longer here to encourage them on a regular basis.

FUN WITH MEMA AND PAPA

We all thoroughly enjoyed our time with Shawnda's parents, Mike and Nancy Gray. Mema returned to Vanuatu with us, and Papa joined the party in mid-June. We have had fun driving around the island, staying overnight at a "four-coconut leaf" island resort, several visits to the park,



seeing the waterfalls, fishing, and Kaela's school carnival. They will be heading back to the States the first week of July, and we sure don't know how we are going to get along without them! Just yesterday I commented, "two babies are hard to handle with four adults...imagine what it will be like when it's 2-on-2!"

Mema and Papa's visit also meant that Shawnda and I got to spend some time together. We very much enjoyed





playing nine holes of golf together, and celebrating our 7-year anniversary by eating dinner at a very nice resort. The food was delicious, and the company was second-to-none. Thanks for everything Mema and Papa!



VILA VIOLENCE

It was a very unusual scene for Vanuatu: Police and medical professionals loading the body of a murder victim at the crime scene. In all, the week would see two murders and one more attempted murder. Those guilty of committing the acts were a handful of the 18 prisoners who had recently escaped. Needless to say the entire city of Port Vila was concerned. Escaped prisoners are nothing new, in fact it's almost a running joke that the prisons here are "come-and-go" facilities. But these escapees were armed with a .22 rifle and knives, and later stole 4 more pistols. The next week the police raided their hideout and recovered the 5 weapons, money and several bags of marijuana, but the men escaped. Tensions have cooled off considerably since the weapons have been recovered, but everyone is still on edge until the criminals are caught and brought to justice.



For the most part, we have felt safe during these events, though we have been more cautious. We do not wish to cause any of you undue stress, but did feel that we should share this information with you all. It is just a reminder that we live in a fallen world, and that the good news of Jesus Christ is sorely needed. It is also a reminder for all of us that life can end in the blink of an eye, and we thus need always be ready for that day. [NOTE: Just before sending this report out, we received word that all but 6 prisoners have been recaptured.]



PRAYER REQUESTS

Rejoice with us that Patrick and Leisava have rejoined our fellowship in Port Vila after having left over a year ago amidst the conflict that was taking place in Vila. As were several others, they were encouraged by a local Christian to quit worshiping with us at that time, and due to fear, they quit coming. Thankfully, after much encouragement, they have decided to return. Please be praying for them and their five children as they take this important step back to Christ.

We are currently dealing with several Christian couples in Vila and Etas whose marriage relationships are struggling. Vanuatu's culture is unique and can often make it more difficult to facilitate a healthy marital relationship. We won't mention these couples by name for their privacy, but do request that you remember them and their struggles in your prayers. We are doing our best to provide biblical counsel to these couples, and ask your prayers for wisdom as well.