

From ^O_R Point ^O_F View

the Ladies of Mission Vanuatu

The Pleasures of Packing

By: Cindy Baker

When Aaron asked me to write this article, I must admit I was less than excited. Only because I don't feel like my daily life here in the States is all that interesting. Then, I started to think about it and I realized that before I started preparing for our big move I had no idea what a woman does before heading to the mission field. Suddenly, my daily life seemed a little overwhelming and more interesting than I had originally thought. Basically, aside from the responsibilities of caring for a seven month old baby, my life can be described as carefully organized chaos. This is because I am constantly having one big packing party.

In reality, I have a lot to organize. First, I organize my thoughts and plans about what I want to take overseas and what I want to leave here in the States. Then, I set to work organizing all of our belongings. For someone who gets a rather disgusting kind of joy out of organizing things, my packing experience varies from a sheer pleasure to a distinct amount of pain. The truth is packing to move is a pain; a necessary evil. I know I must do it and while I like organizing, it is so overwhelming at times that it brings me acute pain.

Organizing my thoughts and plans is probably the most difficult task. This is because I have to figure out what items (furniture, clothes, baby items, household goods, etc.) I will want in Vanuatu and what items I can live without for five years. Some things need to stay here because they are too frivolous for a third world country and other things might get ruined by the extreme humidity and the constant battle against mold. The largest dilemma in regard to this is my pictures. I love pictures. I love looking at them and scrapbooking them. I love all of them. However, because I don't want them all ruined I am only taking three of my scrapbooks instead of all eight of them. The three I am taking will be a test run. If mold is too much of a problem then they will make the long journey home with us on furlough. The next category of organization comes when I have to break my belongings up into those that I will need right when we get there (these I will take on the plane) and those that I can live without for two months while we wait for our shipping crate to arrive in Port Vila. This is difficult also because I don't want to take all of my clothes but, enough to be prepared for different situations.

Neither do I want to take all of Kaela's clothes, but enough to be prepared for her growing, getting them dirty and having accidents of all sorts. As I've learned, babies really know how to go through the clothes.

Finally, I have to organize our belongings – the actual stuff. Once I figure out in my head what I want to do with it all, I have to start packing boxes for storage and boxes for Vanuatu, leaving out all that I am taking on the plane. For example, today my goal is to go through our medicine and separate all that I am pretty sure we will need when we arrive (this will go on the plane) and all that I can wait to receive in the shipping crate. Everything works that way. I have a pile of this and a pile of that. I have a pile of clothes to ship and a pile to take on the plane. The clothes I am wearing now I will pack to take on the plane. Then, I will store them once we get there until we are back on furlough which will probably be in the winter. One bag will be filled with sleeveless dresses, t-shirts, capri pants, and flip-flops. The other bag will be filled with jeans, sweaters and other assorted winter items. If you are feeling overwhelmed, you are in good company. Sometimes I think I packed my brain in one of the boxes marked storage...only I'm not sure which one.

This month my goal is to go through my boxes packed for Vanuatu for the *second* time. We recently found out that when marking boxes for customs that we need to list every single individual item contained in that box, not just a general list. From what we hear the way it works in customs is that when they receive your shipment they have to open your boxes. This is to see if what is listed on the box is really what is contained in the box to make sure no one is trying to sneak anything illegal into the country. If your box specifically lists each item they will likely only check one or two boxes, but if not, they might very well unpack each and every box. Afterwards they kindly leave you to re-pack it all before taking it to your new home.

Going through my boxes means I will break open each box, unpack its contents, un-wrap whatever I can't immediately identify, type up a list of what is in each box (4 bath towels, 6 boxes of Pepto-Bismol tablets, 50 anti-perspirant/deodorants), repack the box, seal it, and attach the list to the outside of the box. As you can see, for me, the fun never ends! By the time we leave if you don't see me waving good-bye at the airport, I may have rolled myself in bubble wrap and packing tape, stuffed myself in a box labeled "Handle with Care! Contains Organized Chaos!", and be on the next ship to Vanuatu.

From Our Point Of View

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