

## **My Daily Journal by Cindy Baker**

### **Friday 4-15-05**

Our first day in Vanuatu. Today did not turn out as either Shawnda or I had hoped. We both (and we aren't sure why) have come down with some sort of stomach bug and have been in various stages of sickness all day. We are both hoping to be much better by Sunday. The area Christians are meeting at Eton Village for worship. We also have a full week ahead of us house hunting and getting some business taken care of in town.

### **Saturday 4-16-05**

I am feeling much better and today we took a bus (a taxi that costs 100 vatu – about \$1 - no matter where you go in town) downtown to the Au Bon Marche (supermarket) in Nambatu. Nambatu is one of the areas of Port Vila where we are hoping to find a house to live in. It was a very nice, new supermarket and we were all surprised by the selection of goods available to us. It has been raining off and on since we got here and from what we have heard all this rain is uncommon for April. Tomorrow we are supposed to worship at Eton Village, about 45 minutes drive from town. However, the roads which were already full of pot holes are now virtually impassible and we were unable to find a transport (taxi) to take us out there. Instead our plan is to worship here in the city in the home of Shem and Rose Nakon. Also today, Morris Felix, one of the leaders in the church at Eton Village came by and visited with us for about 2 hours this afternoon.

### **Sunday 4-17-05**

I am coming to the conclusion that my life might be over-run by ants. There are ants EVERYWHERE and they get into anything left out in the open, including my contact lens case and bath scrubbie! They are already about to drive me nuts and there are about a million living with us! Aaron suggested that they ought to help us with our motel bill, but as of yet they are refusing to pay. The good thing is that they are very small, smaller than the ants we are used to in the US, and I have no problem killing them with my finger, if need be.

We worshipped at Steven Felix's house. We were unable to get out to the Nakon's due to the rain problem. It was very good to be with the local Christians. We had 16 adults and 8 kids in attendance. It was a nice time although some of it was difficult to understand because they speak Bislama so fast. We then took a long, hot walk downtown to the Seaview Takeaway restaurant for lunch. Aaron had a cheeseburger with fries and I had a steak sandwich which, as Mother would say, was as tough as whitleather (whatever that is). It tasted good anyway though. We are looking forward to meeting on Wednesday night with the Christians for Bible class and a potluck dinner. Also, Shawnda and I will meet with the ladies on Tuesday for Bible study and lunch.

### **Monday 4-18-05**

Today is Aaron's birthday. He is 27 and wishing he was younger! Ha. ha. I think the years are moving faster than he would like. Wonderful news! Aaron and I found a house to move into. It will be available for us on Thursday. It is in a nice area called Nambatu (Number 2). Right down the street is the Nambatu Au Bon Marche! Yea! It is in short walking distance. The house is white and sits behind the Mormon church building which should make for some interesting visitors. It is in something like a cul-de-sac in that there is a small road off of the main street and at the end are four houses sitting together like a square. The house has 3 bedrooms and 1 bathroom. It has a nice fenced in backyard, a large living/dining room and a smallish kitchen, unfortunately. Each room is painted a different bright color and that makes it very...islandy. The kitchen is yellow, living/dining room is coral, and the 3 bedrooms are blue, green and lavender. We are very excited to move in. We are headed to the internet café now. I have an email from my friend Sheila to pick up!

### **Tuesday 4-19-05**

This morning we had women's Bible study at Rosanna Felix's house. It was a wonderful time to spend and bond with the local Christian women. There were 7 of us in attendance.

Houston, we have a small problem. This afternoon Eric, Shawnda and I went to look at a duplex set that was for rent in Independence Park area. We loved them! They were both 3 bedroom and 1 bathroom and one of them also has a large extra room and bathroom joined on to it but, is easily accessible from both homes. It would make a PERFECT office for the boys and the ideal situation would be for Eric and Shawnda to live on one side and Aaron and I to live on the other. That way Shawnda and I would be close to each other when the guys are out of town. Now we have a 3 bedroom house in Nambatu that we already agreed to rent (but haven't signed any papers for) and the best, ideal possibility of a duplex also. Aaron is going today to talk to the real estate agent and explain our situation in hopes that he will release us and be understanding of our situation. However, if he doesn't seem to want to let us out of the agreement we will go ahead and keep our agreement. We are all praying for this situation to be resolved with God's assistance. Aaron took his turn for sickness tonight. He believes it was something he ate.

### **Wednesday 4-20-05**

Today was a good day. As God promises – He will work the problems in our life out – if we will let go for 5 minutes and give them to Him!! And He did. The housing situation has turned out for the best. Instead of not taking the house in Nambatu, Mike is going to live there since he has been unable to find an apartment in the downtown area. Most importantly we found out today that the duplex will be for rent starting in May so the Brandell's and Aaron and I will live in the 2 sided duplex. That way will still keep our agreement to rent out the Nambatu house, we will all have housing, and the guys will have the perfect office. Praise God for this blessing!

Also, we met with the brethren in Vila last night for worship and fellowship. It was a wonderful time! We are just getting to know the women and I am enjoying their company so much! We worshipped together and even sang in a Bislama songbook. Then we shared a meal together – rice, lap-lap (that actually didn't taste all that awful), 2 kinds of meat stew and pasta salad (which was our American contribution to the meal). From what Ure` (pronounced Oo-ray, a Christian woman from Vila) it didn't sound like they had ever had pasta salad. I can never tell if they like our American food or if they eat it to be polite. You'd think that they would find our food interesting and look forward to trying it but really they probably think it is just as weird as we do some of what they cook.

It is Ni-Van custom for women to sit on the mats on the floor when the local church meets together. Women can sit in the chairs but they only do if there is room for all the men to sit in the chairs. This isn't a custom to demean women, as it might seem but rather women do it willingly to show respect for the men. I don't mind sitting on the floor at all. However, boy does my back hurt by the end of the night! I guess I am just not used to it!

I am feeling a little burdened by the trials of motherhood – namely that it is so hard to participate fully in spirit and truth during worship. It is the spirit part that is hard. Caring for a crawly, active 9-month-old makes it hard to concentrate on the words I am singing, I don't get to open my Bible because Kaela is always wanting to touch her sticky fingers to the pages and tear them. I pray with one eye open half the time so I can make sure she isn't getting into something she shouldn't and the sermon is nearly a lost cause because I can't pay attention long enough to hear a complete thought. The good thing is that I know I am not alone. Mothers all over the world face the same difficulty and have had the same problem for years. I need to remember that they made it through and so can I! That just makes my daily devotional time that much more important.

### **Friday 4-22-05**

Today is my new birthday. I have been a Christian now for 14 years. 14 blessed years! The last 2 days have been pretty slow-paced which has been nice. Yesterday Mike moved into the Nambatu house. Also the Brandells and Aaron and I all went to town. The boys signed our paperwork and got things all squared away with our duplex. We will be able to move in April 29. We are all so ready and excited! We also found out

yesterday that our crate should arrive in Port Vila on May 23. Lord willing it will! We can't wait! A small concern for us is that we have to account for all new items and we have a lot of things we stocked up on for the trip here. We aren't sure how all that will pan out because we may just have to list items over \$50 or something like that. This weekend we look forward to some men from New Zealand coming to work on the plans for building a church building in Vila.

### **Saturday 4-23-05**

Today Shawnda and I took a bus to the supermarket. Our motel is kind of far away from central downtown so we always take a bus. At the Nambatu Au Bon Marche you can buy most anything. Today I bought what is called Star Bread. It is a sugar crusted sweet bread that is YUMM-Y!!! Also, I found cream cheese for 120 vatu! That was much cheaper than I was expecting.

The men from New Zealand, Antony and Todd came for dinner tonight. It was a very nice visit and good to hear about their desire to build a building in Vila for the church – and one with plumbing!!! Shawnda and I are very excited about that! They were so encouraging and very interested in being involved in the work here.

For the most part government offices are closed here between 11am and 1pm. It seems like we can only get one thing done a day. And I know why. 2 reasons: because island time means the favorite phrase is, "come back in two days and we'll have it done" and because it is so stinking HOT AND HUMID!!! After one trip to town I am beat for the rest of the afternoon. It is amazing how the heat and humidity can suck the energy out of you.

### **Sunday 4-24-05**

Today we went to worship in Eton. We took one car (with Aaron, Antony, Todd, Kaela and I) and a bus (mini-van) with Eric, Shawnda, Mike, Gomen's family, Steven's family, and Shem's family. It was such a nice time! It had been 2 years since Aaron and I had been to Eton. The road was much worse getting there and the 45 minute drive took 1.25 hours – lots of potholes = bumpy and a lot of swerving! But, it was a beautiful drive getting there! Mike taught Bible class. Before worship began they had a small welcome for our mission team and gave us all the most beautiful leis of fresh flowers – yellow, pink and orange. They were gorgeous and it was so thoughtful of the church to welcome us in such a way. Todd gave the sermon and did an excellent job. Afterwards, a few of us went to Eton beach. It is a beautiful beach and local tourist attraction. It costs 300 vatu (about \$3) per person to enter but Morris owns part of the beach so we entered for free! Then we went back to the building and had a lunch that they prepared for us. Including lap-lap, of course. This time it was made from manioc (a locally grown root crop, similar to a potato). It was much better than the banana lap-lap, but still chewy and bland and a little too lap-lappy for my liking! We sang a few more songs after lunch and then our group from Port Vila headed back home. After our long and busy day we are all exhausted.

### **Monday 4-26-05**

Today was a satisfying day. Shawnda and I went downtown this morning to the customs office to get our pictures taken for our driver's licenses. Fortunately, we don't have to take a drivers test to get a Vanuatu license. We just have to show them our Colorado license. Then we took a bus to Rosanna's for Bible study. Rosanna lives just one street over from where we'll be living – so it will be nice to walk to her house each week instead of paying for a bus. Bible study was very encouraging. We ended up just having a small devotional, I gave it on Psalm 145. Ure` and Roseanna wanted to talk about the plans for strengthening the Christian women on the island. We plan to spend some Tuesdays in Bible study and prayer or visiting local women who are sick or have fallen away. We were also very encouraged to find out that in the past that they have done something like a Ladies Day with the women from Eton Village and Epau Village. It is funny because I just assumed Ladies Day is just an American thing but, you know what assuming gets you. However, transportation can be a problem. We hope to start up again soon and maybe meet together every 3 months. Shawnda and I were very encouraged by this because we had no idea that they were even involved

in that sort of thing here. I was very impressed with Ure` because she said that they feel it is important to talk about these things with us so that we (the local women and missionary women) are all on the same page in helping with the church and women in Vanuatu.

#### **Wednesday 4-27-05**

Today Shawnda and I went shopping for some dishes but to no avail. I did find a skirt that is rather islandy, so I was happy about that. Being Wednesday we met together with the local Christians for a devotional and fellowship meal at Steven and Rosanna's. We had a great time! No lap-lap this time! We did have rice with steak and potatoes, cucumbers, corn on the cob and grapefruit. Yummy – all except the cucumbers, I personally want to gag at the thought of one! Shawnda and I were able to spend a lot of time talking with Ure` and Rosanna. They are wonderful women and we always enjoy being together. As Ure` said the more time we spend together the closer we will be. So true. We really need the friendship of these women to help us adjust to this new culture and new language. We also got to spend a lot of time talking about having babies, which is one of our favorite subjects! And we found out that it is relatively easy for someone to adopt a Ni-Van baby, as teenage pregnancy and children being born to parents who are not able to care for them is common.

#### **Thursday 4-28-05**

Today was a bit of a lazy day for me – a much needed one. Although Shawnda went to town to run a few errands, I opted to stay home. Going to town can be tiring, especially when carrying Kaela all around. I needed a day of rest. Shawnda took a skirt to get it hemmed for me. We both had skirts that we decided were too long (down near our ankles and WAY TOO HOT) so we had them hemmed to a few inches below the knee. It only cost us 500 vatu per skirt to have this done at a Chinese tailor. Antony, Todd, Aaron, Eric and Mike all took a day long trip around the island. They also visited Eton and Epau Villages and got to see several interesting sights. They had a nice time and promised to take Shawnda, Kaela and I later after we get a car.

The Brandell's and Aaron and I ended the day with a game of Pitch. 3 games really – 2 and a tie-breaker. We all were kind of crazy and giggly, especially Shawnda and I, which is probably a big surprise to anyone who knows us (ha. ha.). It is fun to just relax and enjoy being together even if the guys ended up winning and rubbed it in a little!

#### **Friday 4-29-05**

I spent nearly all of tonight working on our list for customs. As it turns out we are allotted \$500 per person for brand new items in our shipment. Anything over that amount (\$1500 for our family) we have to pay for. We have to list all items in our crate that are new. It really adds up because we stocked up on A LOT of things in preparation to come over here: drink mixes, deodorant, shampoo, medicine, etc. So we have to account for the cost of all of this. So far my total is \$1850 and I am already \$350 over for our family. This is definitely one of those things that we wished we had known about before shipping our crate. We would have made sure to use each item once so it couldn't be classified as never been used.

#### **Saturday 4-30-05**

I spent this afternoon working on our customs list but, I am still not finished with it yet! I worked on the laundry today also. Hanging the laundry to dry reminds me of my childhood – only here you have to plan more. We hung some clothes line under our porch overhang because apparently hanging your clothes in the rain defeats the purpose of getting them dry. Also, you have to do laundry more frequently because you only have so much room to dry your clothes and because it may take a couple days to get them dry during the wet season. I also learned the hard way that you can't leave your clothes out all night – someone snatched one of Kaela's bath towels, Mike's Broncos shirt and a couple pairs of flip-flops....needless to say Aaron went the next day and bought some more flip-flops. His beloved Baywatch flip-flops that his Mom bought him in college are finally a thing of the past.

### **Sunday 5-1-05**

Wow! May is already here! Today was a nice day. Kaela decided to get up at 4:30am – that wasn't so nice. But, anyhow, at 7:30am the hotel (Coral Motel) owner came to pick us up. He volunteered to drive us and our baggage over to Mike's house. We are staying there Sunday and Monday night to save money before we move in on Tuesday to our house. The owners, Tony and Beth have been so nice and accommodating! They are an Australian couple that bought the hotel in January. During the time we stayed there it was slow season and we were their only guests. They let us pick movies from their home collection to play at any time we wanted. They have been so flexible with us during our ever-changing housing schedule also.

We walked 15 minutes in the blazing sun to the Felix's for worship. Who, by the way we found out her name is Rose-Hannah not Roseanna. It sounds the same because they just run all their words together. Todd preached again and it was a very good lesson on the sacrifice of Jesus. We shared a meal together (they have a potluck on the first Sunday of every month). We then all walked back to Mike's in the REALLY blazing hot sun and decided that today would be a good day to go swimming. So we planned to go to Irakor Island. However, we didn't leave here till 4:30pm – due to Kaela's nap. We took a bus to Todd and Antony's motel and then walked a short distance to the free ferry that goes out to Irakor Island – that took 5 or 10 minutes and it was Kaela's first boat ride. We didn't do much swimming but, we did some wading and you could walk out pretty far from shore and still only be waist deep. We saw A LOT of star fish – big ones like I had never seen before, several sea cucumbers (which are nasty snake looking things that rest in the sand and don't really do anything) and a few small fish. It was a fun time! We came back to Mike's, had dinner (chicken stir fry) and decided to play Presidents, a card game that we all like. I am happy to say that I was President for the last few rounds which was a nice change from my usual position of Low Scum. Eric, Aaron and I all wanted to play another game so we made up a game called Itch (which is short for Ghetto Pitch). Really we were trying to play Call-for-your-Partner Pitch with only 3 people so we kept having to change the rules to make it work right. We went to bed at 10:15 with plans to perfect it more tomorrow.

### **Monday 5-2-05**

Today started off...interesting. I woke up at 8:15 to the sound of Kaela coughing outside my window and Aaron smacking her on the back. He had got up with Kaela at 6:15am because I was awake with her for a while at 2am. He came in a few minutes later with her and said she had choked on a piece of grass that he thought he had taken away from her but, she apparently kept a little extra to eat. Not a good idea. She seemed to be okay for a bit. Then Shawnda came in to say good morning and Kaela started sneezing. She sneezed several times and I thought she just had dust in her nose so I didn't think much of it and went about my business getting her ready for her bath. She sneezed 3 more times and when I went to wipe her nose I got a surprise - there was the piece of grass!

### **Tuesday 5-3-05**

Today was moving day! Yea! We are finally all moved in and settled. It is such a relief to unpack and know that it will be the last time for a good long while. Both couples really like our house. And Shawnda and I love that we only have to walk 20 feet to each others doors but, we still have our own family space. Our land lady, Yvette (a French woman), said that we could paint and she will buy the paint if we do the work. It's a great deal for us because paint is expensive and both of our houses need painting! It is WONDERFUL to be moved in and has boosted my moral to be out of a suitcase after 3 weeks.

### **Wednesday 5-4-05**

Today I did my best to get organized – although it took me till late afternoon to get it all put up. I tackled the laundry this morning for my first time ever without a washing machine. I was not thrilled and must admit that I became a little frustrated. I don't know how my grandma ever did it on a regular basis without going crazy. I was exhausted after doing 2 loads for my family of 3. You can call me a wimp if you want. I am

okay with that. God bless modern technology!!! My hands are rubbed raw from trying to wring out the clothes. That was definitely the worst part!

I forgot to mention that yesterday Shawnda and I hired a house girl. She will come twice a week. One day to clean, dust, sweep, mop, do laundry, etc. Then later in the week to do laundry again for me. It wasn't my original intention to have a house girl but, Aaron encouraged me to think about it. I'm glad I did because it will be nice to have the extra help around the house. It will be a great help when the mission work really begins to pick up. So, I hadn't intended on having a house girl but, now I have one. We learned when we got here that house girls are very common. Not just for Ex-Patriots but, also for some Ni-Vans. Steven and Rose-Hannah Felix have a full-time house girl. Ours is named Rachel, she is very nice, and she came very highly recommended by the family from New Zealand that lived here before us. She worked full-time for them and helped them when they had church functions in their home and even stayed with their 5 boys when they had to be out of town. To me, that says a lot about her character. Shawnda and I are also hoping for the chance to study with her.

#### **Thursday 5-5-05**

Yesterday we had women's Bible study and set some definite plans for upcoming Ladies Days in June and August. Shawnda and I will be the speakers at them. So we are excited about that. Today we planned to go to the hospital to visit Rebekah Felix's mother. She is about 80 years old and had a stroke. She also having problems with her diabetes and high blood pressure. It was very moving to go see her. You can tell that her illness is very hard on Rebekah. While we were there she told us that Randy English studied with and baptized her mother last year when he was here. What a great comfort that must be to her to know that her mother is now a Christian.

Tonight we are having a going away party for Todd and Antony at Eric and Shawnda's. It will be the first time that the church members have ever met in our house. It has been great having these two brothers here. We are already looking forward to their next visit.

#### **Saturday 5-7-05**

This morning we got up at 5am and caught a bus to the airport to go see Todd and Antony off. We then came home and since we were pretty tired Aaron and I took advantage of Kaela taking a nap and went to sleep ourselves. I spent the day doing a few random chores and started on dinner at 4:45pm. We had our first real Mexican tasting meal since we have been here – chicken nachos – and boy were they good! We played cards and Farkle with Eric and Shawnda tonight. I haven't mentioned it before, but we have an abundance of cats living at our house. They are just the come and go kind, which is good. We feed them scraps because we want them to stick around and keep our property mouse-free! There are 4 adult cats that are regulars and 4 kittens. Shawnda and I named them all because we thought it would be fun for them to have names. All of them except for one of the kittens are named after lead characters in musicals. We have Eliza (My Fair Lady), Dolly (Hello Dolly), Gigi (Gigi), Calamity (Calamity Jane), Gertie – (Oklahoma) - she meows in an exceptionally loud and annoying way, Millie and Miss Dorothy (Thoroughly Modern Millie). The last kitten was named by Eric and Aaron and his name is Rudy --- the rest of his name I won't mention because it is not very...complimentary.

#### **Sunday 5-8-05**

Today is Mother's Day. My very 1<sup>st</sup>! Aaron surprised me this morning with a fresh picked flower arrangement and a card. Then this evening he took me out for pizza (its funny how are favorite American stand-bys become a real treat here)! We had a very nice time and ate ice cream drumsticks on our walk home. Being a small town that shuts down early, there weren't many city lights to overshadow the night sky. The stars were amazing to look at! Living in the city you forget how beautiful God created the night sky to be. Aaron and I were also thankful that Eric and Shawnda volunteered to watch Kaela so we could have a "real date".

### **Tuesday 5-10-05**

Rachel, our house girl came this morning. She did laundry, swept and mopped the entire house, cleaned the bathroom and toilet room for both the Brandell's and us. It sure is nice to have her help with all of these tasks. She comes back on Thursday, but only to do laundry for me. Then next week she starts coming on Monday for laundry and Thursday for cleaning.

We had Women's Bible study today. It is always so much fun and so encouraging to be with the women here. Rose Hannah had to work late so she didn't get to come. However, Rose Nakon was able to make it for the first time in a couple of weeks. We discussed the plan for Children's Bible class. It seems like it is popular here to have Bible class during the sermon instead of at the same time as adult class. However, Shawnda and I gently urged them to have it during adult class. We believe it is best for two main reasons: listening to the sermon, a message from the Word, is an act of worship. Whoever would be teaching the class during the sermon would miss out on that part of worship. Also, I believe it is important for children to take part in the worship service, even if they don't understand all of it. It teaches them as they grow that worship is a sacred time, to be devoted to God. They need to be used to singing and praying and sitting quietly during the sermon because one day they will understand why our worship to God is so important. Now that I am off my soapbox, we also set a schedule to rotate the teachers, giving us all opportunity to teach and a break to sit in on adult Bible class. When our crate arrives Shawnda and I will get together with the women and look through our materials for a curriculum that the women want to start on. This will give them a definite plan to help the children grow spiritually. We are so excited for all of this to start in June! We have a wonderful group of women to work with and a very active and fun group of children!

### **Wednesday 5-11-05**

This morning Shawnda, Kaela and I walked into town to talk with a doctor. We went to the private medical clinic and spoke with a very nice French doctor. He is a general practitioner so I will probably take Kaela to him. He was able to answer several of our questions regarding cost (4000 vatu - \$40 per consultation), payment (pay up front), as well as questions about having babies (one of our major concerns), and getting vaccines for Kaela (not a problem). There are 3 doctors in the clinic – Dr. Bador is French and did all of his training in France. Then there is Dr. Spooner who is a Ni-Van. He trained in Fiji as well as in the States. Then there is Dr. Talimanu who is from one of the Northern Pacific islands and did his training in Fiji and also in New Zealand. All three are very friendly and willing to answer our questions. We found out that Dr. Talimanu is the one that delivers babies so we took particular interest in getting to know more about him. Dr. Talimanu introduced himself to us as Kaiva (his first name) which was an interesting reminder of the difference in mindset of the Islanders and Americans.

We then left and went by Seaview Takeaway and talked with a girl named Yoland who is interested in studying the Bible with us. She is someone who Randy English met when he was here and he gave Shawnda and I her information. We set up a study with her for Friday at 4pm. Then, because it was SO STINKING HOT (literally) we decided to get ourselves an ice cream cone. Only 100 vatu per cone for 2 scoops! Yea! Kaela especially enjoyed our ice cream and cried when we didn't have any left to give her. Shawnda got vanilla and I got one scoop of vanilla and one of chocolate. The chocolate I thought tasted exactly like a Wendy's Frostie! Yum!

### **Friday 5-13-05**

Last night we had our team meeting night. Our plan is to meet once a week. They guys met at 4pm to discuss mission work business, on the forefront was what to do about our car situation which is becoming a bit of a headache. Then we ate together and played games which is always a fun time.

I am SO very, very happy!!! I got to talk to Jill (my sister) today! We called her over the Internet and talked for 10 minutes. There is a bit of a delay but, it is worth it just to hear the sound of her voice!

Shawnda and I headed to our Bible study this afternoon with Yoland. Yoland brought a girl with her who she introduced as her sister but, turned out to be her cousin. That is one of the quirky things about the

Ni-Van culture. People call others their brother or sister but, they really aren't. The other person might be a cousin or even a friend. If someone says, "he is my father." The man might be their father or their uncle or their grandfather. It always makes things interesting when you try to sort out who belongs in what immediate family. Anyway, we learned that Yoland is 27 and she is from the village of Epau. She also has a 6 year old child that lives with her mother in Epau. You find it common here for girls who have children at a very young age to send her child to live with her parents who usually live in a village. This custom of children living with family other than their parents is very common here. Sometimes even parents who are married will send their children to live with relatives in the city. This is for a variety of reasons but, the main ones are that they are sent elsewhere so they can go to a certain school or simply because those relatives want the child to come live with them, so the child goes and lives with them. This is a VERY cultural way of doing things and is sometimes hard for us Americans to understand. Anyway, things went well with the Bible study with Yoland and we plan to meet again on Monday morning.

### Saturday 5-14-05

We have been here once month exactly today. It's such a strange feeling because on one hand I feel like we've been here for a long time but, on the other hand there is the stark reality of how little time I have lived here. Today was the first time since we have been here that I have felt down-trodden. Learning a new language is quite the experience. Today I became frustrated because I realize how very little I understand of Bislama. People talk and I haven't a clue what they are saying. Even when they slow down for my benefit I still can't catch and process all the words. My pride limits me to asking, "what?" only twice and if I can't get it by the third time I feel like a complete moron. I wonder sometimes if some of the people here think I only can contribute, "yes, okay and ooohhhh..." it a conversation. If only they knew that behind my smile is utter confusion and sometimes a tear of frustration or two. It's easy to clarify what someone is saying and ask questions when I am with one or two of the Christian women. They are always patient and understanding. However, if I am in a group I am lost – fully and completely. I know I will have a different outlook on this in a few months. As for now, the road seems uphill both ways at times. In the mean time I'll stick to my favorite Bislama stand-by – "mi no save" or "I don't understand".