

Shawnda's journal (April 15th – May 14th)

Friday, April 15th – My first day in Vanuatu and I woke up feeling quite sick. I spent the entire day vomiting and feeling nauseous. What a welcome!!! By lunch-time Cindy was feeling the same, so we both spent our first day inside the house feeling miserable. We really wanted to go walk around town, but that wasn't happening today. The guys went into town – it was a very rainy day, so that was fun for them. I really don't think I have ever seen it rain this much. It is just like someone is pouring a huge bucket of water over Port Vila (it is so constant and drenching!)

Saturday, April 16th – I woke up feeling much better and we ventured into town. We took Cindy and Aaron to see the Numbatu grocery store. They were pleasantly surprised. They went back home and Eric and I ate at the food stalls at the market. They are so good. We had steak and rice for 250 vt (About \$2.30 US). It is so good to finally be here. Everytime I am in town I am reminded of how friendly the people in Vanuatu are. We know there will be many opportunities to talk with people and share the gospel. We are hoping to have at least a temporary structure built soon on the church's property so that we will have a place to invite people to. That is a major problem in Vila. We tell people that we are the church of Christ and they ask "where?" What they mean is "Where is your building?" We tell them that we are trying to build a building, but for now we are meeting at one of the Christian's homes. Although we know that the Christians in the New Testament met in people's homes, in this culture that is difficult for people to do. Most people don't feel comfortable going to someone's house that they have never met. Of course the ones who are already Christians don't have a problem with it, it is the ones we invite who do. That is a problem that needs a solution soon.

Sunday, April 17th – It's the Lord's day. It's our first one in Vanuatu. (It's hard to believe that only a week ago we were worshipping with the Christians at Columbine with a foot of snow on the ground outside!) We met at Stephen's house b/c we can meet inside (It's been raining so much lately and the roads out to Shem's are bad too). When we arrived at Stephens we were greeted by all the Christians with hugs and handshakes. As I made my way around the room hugging those precious people, I had to hold back tears. I was just so overcome with love for the Christians there and gratefulness for God allowing us to be here. The singing was so meaningful and sweet. Goman said a beautiful prayer thanking God for sending us to help them and asking God to help us adjust b/c he knew it was a new lifestyle that we were going to have to get used to. It meant so much to me that he understood that it was an adjustment for us. Before leaving we agreed to meet again on Wednesday and the women on Tuesday at 11:30 at RoseHannah's.

Monday, April 18th – First priority – finding a house. (The hotel is expensive.) We looked at one today in the Numbatu area. It was the only one this guy had available in that area in our price range. It was a 3 bedroom house. The Bakers decided to take it. We ate at the food stalls for lunch again. It is so good (and a great deal for the price!). It is a great place to sit back and observe. (The food stalls are just tables set up in the back of the market. You ask one of the cooks for whatever you want – steak, stew, or fish - and they'll either start making it, or they'll point you to someone who has it if they don't.) After lunch, Cindy and I went to the grocery store to get food for dinner and ice cream for Aaron's birthday. It was our first time to do a "girl's only" outing. We were fine with it. It is a completely safe place. I never feel uncomfortable (as in unsafe) in town during the day.

Tuesday, April 19th – Cindy and I went to Rose Hannah's to meet with the ladies. They asked one of us to share something. We decided that I would this time. I prepared a short lesson about prayer. We took chicken salad and rolls for lunch. For a while it was only me, Cindy and Rebecca (she and Morris are in from Eton – they haven't been able to go home since it has been raining so much and the roads to Eton are really bad when it rains!) Ure came and then Rose Hannah and Rose. We sang some songs, Rebecca said a prayer and then I shared the lesson I had prepared. I talked about prayer – using Jesus as an example for our prayer life.

I hope it was encouraging to the ladies. After, we ate a small lunch and visited. We are trying to talk using Bislama whenever we can, so Cindy and I practiced then.

This afternoon we went and looked at a duplex and found it to be just perfect. The only problem was that the Bakers had already agreed to move into the other place. We are trying to figure something out so we can move into the duplex with the Bakers. It sure would be nice to be next door to each other.

Wednesday, April 20th – We are waiting to hear about the duplex. The guys went to town to try and work out the bank account niches (but once again, “A day’s work with nothing to show for it”). It has been a bit frustrating, but that is just the way it is – slow paced. This afternoon I called the realtor and we found out that we are going to get to move there. We will go sign the papers tomorrow. (Mike decided that he would take the house the Bakers originally wanted so that the Bakers and us could take the duplex.)

Went to Stephen and Rose Hannah’s for Bible study. We sang several songs – a few in Bislama – prayed, and then Mike said a few words of encouragement. We ate together and had lap-lap. The banana kind – but I was able to handle it. I guess it’s true, you do get used to it. (I didn’t say I liked it, just that I am at least able to stomach it.) I was so tired that as we sat and talked after we ate my brain wasn’t functioning right. I couldn’t think of what I wanted to say in Bislama at all. I was getting frustrated with myself. I keep trying to remind my self to take it slow, and that I a just learning. We’ve only been here a week and things like this take time! We had a great time with the women tonight. I already love these women so much and feel comfortable around them. They are really helping us with Bislama (and laughing when we can’t roll our “r” when we try to repeat what they say. It’s so funny to them that we can’t do it.

Thursday, April 21st – Mike moved into his house. I think he’s glad to have his own space again. This morning the guys tried to get Driver’s licenses, went to the police station to “register,” got some stuff worked out at the bank, etc. The poor guys have so many “business” things to take care of in town every day. That’s okay, they knew that the first few weeks would be this way, it’s just frustrating to have to wait for everything. It seems that everything they are dealing with is ‘Come back tomorrow.’ It rained all afternoon, we went back into town to sign the lease, went to the grocery store (which seems to be a somewhat daily trip) and came back.

Saturday, April 23rd – Spent the morning reading, studying, playing with Kaela. Cindy and I went to the grocery store – we shopped for the weekend (we didn’t want to have to go back tomorrow or Monday). The guys went to the airport to meet the two men who are coming from New Zealand to try to get some things “ironed out” for the church building in Port Vila. We invited them to dinner. We really enjoyed getting to know them (Antony Raine & Todd O’Donnell). They asked lots of questions about our work here and shared some of their hopes for the church building here. We asked questions about New Zealand, the church there, their family, etc.

Sunday, April 24th – We woke up early so we would be sure and be ready when Stephen came for us in the bus. He arrived with the bus already full of Christians from Port Vila and when we were all loaded, we headed out to Eton. The road was pretty bad so it took a little over an hour to get there. By the time we arrived Eric wasn’t feeling so well (Stephen had to swerve a lot to miss potholes). When we arrived there were only a few people around. But, within minutes of us arriving, people started coming in. Then when Bob Saul rang the bell even more people came. There was a nice big crowd. We sang some songs and then Morris gave the team a special welcome from the Christians at Eton. He had us each come up and get a handmade fresh lei that some of the women had made for us. He said that it was a symbol of how much they appreciated us coming here to work with them. It was very meaningful to all of us.

Mike taught a class on Christ being the head of the church. The Christians seemed to listen well and understand. Worship time was great. I always love the singing. The Lord’s Supper here is wonderful b/c they take so long to pass the bread and fruit of the vine around that you really have time to meditate on the Lord’s sacrifice and pray. I really like having that extra time. Todd gave a lesson from 2 Peter. It was about godly

conduct. Vanuatu is becoming less moral (in general) so it was a great reminder that as Christians, our lives are to be set apart and different from the world.

While the women prepared the meal some of us went with Stephen and Rose Hannah to Eton beach. (Morris owns some of the land out there – Stephen is his son.) Rose Hannah is pregnant, to the waves really help soothe her back and she said they are good for her stomach. So, she needed to swim a little. I felt bad about leaving the women to do the work, but Rose Hannah insisted that we go with her, so we did. When we got back, the food was ready to eat. So, we all ate together. I ate lap-lap – still not a big fan – but I can at least tolerate it (the kind made from manioc is much better than the kind made from cooking bananas!!!)

After eating, we all sat around and talked. Then we sang a few songs and had a prayer before we left to come back to town. When we were singing, it started raining really hard (sideways into the church building). It let up right before we got on the bus to come home. The trip home was pretty quiet. I think we were all tired. Except those boys in the back seat were having a good ‘ole time, I don’t think boys that age ever get tired! :o)

Monday, April 25th – Cindy and I went to get our driver’s licenses today. They couldn’t do it b/c the machine was broken, so we said we’d come back the next day. We all ate lunch in town and then went to the grocery store (it really seems like we go every day – but when we get our own place, I don’t think we’ll have to go as often). Cindy and I went home and the guys stayed in town to try to get a few more things done. They finally got our work permits (Eric has been checking every other day since we got here). We found out today that we can’t move into our new place until Monday (or Tuesday, b/c Monday is a public holiday).

Tuesday, April 26th – Cindy and I went and got our driver’s licenses. We took all of our licenses to the police station where they entered our driver’s license numbers in their book and sent us on our way. It’s funny b/c the police station has you go get a picture taken, bring it back to them and they just staple it into a spiral notebook type book and write your name & driver’s license number on it – not too official! :o) We headed to Rose Hannah’s for a time of fellowship and planning. We sang some songs, had a prayer and then Cindy shared a scripture from the Psalms. We spent quite a while discussing what they wanted for the ladies here. Ure shared some ideas about us meeting with the women from Eton and Epau. We decided that we should have some “Ladies Days,” and we decided that we should look at our calendars and decide on dates when we got together the next week. They also want to continue meeting each week at Rose Hannah’s during lunch time for encouragement and fellowship with just the women. They also talked about wanting to have a youth camp during the school holiday in August. We decided to let the men talk about that. We are just going to talk with our husbands and have them get the men together to try and work out some details. It was a great time of planning and sharing our hopes for the church in Port Vila.

Wednesday, April 27th – We went to town to get some things for the new house (to last us until the crate comes). We stayed in town looking around until lunch-time and then came back to the house to eat. We went to Stephen and Rose Hannah’s for a devotional and fellowship meal. Antony and Todd picked us up in their rental car (they only had it a few days and they said they wanted to get the most out of it). When we got there, Morris greeted us b/c Stephen and Rose Hannah weren’t home from work yet. We spent time talking with the kids in Bislama (Alfonia is Stephen and Rose Hannah’s and Tamata is their nephew who lives with them). I played a game with Tamata – yesterday was the first time he ever even smiled at me (he’s shy) but tonight he warmed right up to me, started talking to me and wanted to play a game. I enjoyed that. It is good for me to be around Alfonia and Tamata b/c they go to French school so the only way to get them to respond is by talking in Bislama. It’s good practice.

When everyone got there, we sang some songs in Bislama, a few in English, and then prayed. Todd did a short devotional about the Providence of God He talked about how God works in our lives, we may not understand exactly how He works, but we know that He does. It was a good lesson.

After the devotional, we had a meal together. It seems that everytime we have gotten together with the Christians, we are eating too. I guess that's okay, but I wanted to lose weight when I got here, not gain it! :o) We visited for a long time with the ladies. Cindy and I are both getting better at speaking in Bislama and understanding it too. We asked Rose Hannah about the hospital and doctors. She was happy to share with us (she is at the hospital pretty often for check ups b/c she is pregnant). We are always asking the ladies here many questions about Vanuatu and they are so good to share with us. They have been such a blessing to Cindy and me. I already love them dearly and count them among my friends.

Thursday, April 28th – The guys went with Antony and Todd around the island. It was a good way for them to get an idea of where we are living. It's hard to explain to someone who has never been here. This island is pretty small (like 25 square miles) but it doesn't seem like it's small when you are here. It didn't take as long as I thought it would (and they even stopped in Eton for an hour, Epau for 30 minutes, and the WWII "museum" for an hour). They were glad that they went. Eric said that it helped him get a better perspective of the island – but that it was an extremely bumpy road. I got 2 skirts altered and then went to town to mail a postcard (but once I got there I realized that I had forgotten the postcards) – oops! What a goof. Anyway, I went to the store to get a few things I knew we needed and then came home and worked on my journal.

Friday, April 29th – Eric got our phone situation worked out. We decided on a mobile phone instead of one at our house (which is what the majority of people here have). So, he got that all taken care of. We have to wait until we move in to get the Internet though. That is frustrating, but at least we can use the Internet Café! Cindy and I went to the grocery store in the morning. I spent the afternoon making a list of the items in our crate that are new. We found out after we arrived that they only allow you a certain \$ amount of new items per person in your crate that are considered "duty free". You have to pay duty on the rest. It was a big, long, drawn out process that took me all the way up until bedtime to finish. Tomorrow Eric will make sure the information is in the correct format for the customs guys.

Saturday, April 30th – We decided to move in with Mike for a few days until we are able to move into our duplex (to save money on the hotel). We all went to the Numbatu grocery store and then walked to Mike's house to leave our groceries there and rest for a little while. We decided to walk to our duplex just to see how far it was – it only took us 10 –15 minutes ... not bad. We took a bus back to the motel. When we arrived, the owner reminded us that he would be happy to take us and our luggage wherever we needed to go in the morning. That was so nice of him! We gladly accepted his offer and arranged a time for him to bring the truck up to the house. We went back to the house and packed up. It had been a great temporary home.

Sunday, May 1st – We woke up, got ready for church, loaded the bags into Tony's truck (the owner) and headed off to our new temporary home. Once we got there, we unpacked, cooled off for a minute and then headed out to Stephen and Rose Hannah's for worship. We walked. It wasn't too hot. I was surprised to see some new faces when we arrived. Bill (from Eton) has twin sons, Kal and Manu, who live in Vila and go to school. They were there (I think they come all the time, they just haven't been here the last two weeks). There was also a man name Joel. He lives out at Black Sands near Shem and had been studying with him there. It was nice to see him at worship. We had another fellowship meal. It was really good. The ladies sat around and talked about different topics. When I asked if we were going to meet on Wednesday night they said "yes," but we won't eat. That was fine with me. Then they started to change their mind b/c Antony and Todd are leaving Saturday. They said that it is Melanesian custom that you eat with someone when they come and then eat with them when they leave (if they come for a visit). So, they said we should eat together. Then they decided that we should do it on Friday. Rose Hannah said we could do it at her place, but I asked if we could at ours instead. She was more

than happy to oblige since she is always responsible for fellowships. I knew we'd be moved into our new house by then, so it would be fun to have everyone over.

On the way home it was so hot. We decided to go to the ocean to just wade in it if nothing else just to cool off. But, Kaela needed a nap. So, we waited for her to get up and then headed to Antony and Todd's place (b/c they had a free ferry over to Erakor Island – a small little island right off of where they were staying). We only had about an hour of daylight left, but we enjoyed wading in the water and looking at the starfish and sea cucumbers (which Cindy and I were afraid of at first b/c we thought they were some kind of sea snake). We got to watch the sun set. It was beautiful. It is amazing to get to spend time at the ocean and witness, first hand, the majesty and creativeness of God's handi-work. In Colorado we got to witness God's beautiful creation in a different way. Those mountains were gorgeous. In a way, it's the same thing b/c the same God who created those majestic mountains also created the beautiful ocean. It's just neat to get to experience His creation in this different place and in a new way. The ocean is also a constant reminder of how vast God is. I mean, seriously, here we are, living on a piece of land that is only 25 square miles, surrounded by thousands of miles of water, how can you not think about the power and size of God?

Monday, May 2nd – I love mornings here. I have been able to be so relaxed in the morning. I wake up early b/c the sun comes up at 5:30 (I am usually able to sleep until 6:30 or 7:00 though). Since I get up early, I usually have time to study and pray before I start the day. I prefer studying in the morning, so it is really working out great.

When we sat down to eat dinner, we heard a knock at the door and it was Morris. He had just come over to visit with us. We offered him food and since he hadn't eaten yet, he accepted and joined us. He talked about what was going on in the village. He also shared some ideas he had for us to reach out in Vila. He is a wise man and we are glad to have his advice and friendship.

Tuesday, May 3rd – Moving day! We are all so excited about getting moved into our places and getting unpacked (living out of a suitcase gets a little old after a while). Eric left to go get the key from the realtor. While he was gone, Eddie Karis (from Eton) showed up at Mike's door. He came in and visited for a while. He stayed for about an hour – Eric came back in the meantime. Eddie, Eric and Aaron walked to the market to hire a truck to take us and our luggage to our new house. We had to move it all into one side (the Baker's) b/c the guy that lived here before us was still moving out of the other side. Cindy and I went to the grocery store. We were both anxious to get some things to set up our kitchen (some essentials like cooking oil – b/c we pan fry almost everything, matches, butter, bread, meat, etc). The guys walked to town to email and saw Eddie again on the way. He took them by his relative's home and Eric found out that Kal, Manu (the twins), Lissie, and Nettie all live together (they are cousins) in a house with Nettie's parents. In Vanuatu, if a kid moves into town to go to school or get a job, they usually just live with relatives. This is what is happening in this case. Anyway, I am glad to know where Lissie lives (she is a young lady I met last year who is from Eton but has now moved to Vila to work). Now I can try to contact her and get her to start coming to worship with the church here.

Wednesday, May 4th – Today is the first real day in our new house. I am so happy to be here. First order of business was laundry. I asked Eric to hang some clothesline under the carport and he did. I started a sink full of laundry. While I was still elbow-deep in laundry, the realtor showed up. Eric walked the realtor around the house (she inventoried all the furniture so she'd know what we were to leave when we move out). I tried to get the laundry finished so I could hang it out to dry. One trip out to the clothesline proved to be more than I had bargained for. I stepped off the end of the sidewalk right into a hole and twisted my ankle! I fell down and dropped the shirt I had just washed. It hurt pretty bad, but I got up and limped to the clothesline so I could hang the rest of the clothes. I just thought I'd "Walk it out."

Pretty soon Madam Colardeau – the owner of this duplex – came over to bring us our refrigerator and a bookcase for the Bakers. She is an interesting lady. She's an older French woman – she seems very gruff, but she's actually pretty nice. (She takes good care of her renters I think.) Cindy and I both want to paint our houses (she just needs to paint a few bedrooms and I need to paint the bedrooms and living room). We asked

Madam Colardeau if we could. At first she said, "What? That will cost a fortune!" Then she walked around the houses and before leaving said, "Okay, I'll buy the paint and supplies if you guys will paint." She's funny like that.

I spent the rest of the day unloading our suitcases (I didn't get to the day before b/c we didn't get "moved" into our side until yesterday evening). It's so nice to be unpacked and to be able to organize some things how we want them in our new house.

We walked to Stephen's tonight for Bible study. It was a nice change. I'm going to like living close to them. It was nice to get together. We sang and prayed and then Todd did a devotional about Jesus' sacrifice. It was a good thought. Eric told Stephen that he wanted a man from Vila to preach on Sunday. Stephen said that was fine (he would do it). Antony and Todd walked to our house with us so they'd know where to come on Friday night for the "feast." We sure have enjoyed them being here. They have been a huge encouragement to us in our first weeks here. They said that us living here will really help them when they come and when they send campaigners b/c they will now have a place to stay. We are so glad to house anyone who comes to help with the Lord's work in Vanuatu (or just to visit, for that matter).

On the way to Stephen's my ankle was hurting again. As I sat there for an hour and a half it started swelling and was hurting even worse. By the time I stood up, I could hardly put my weight on it. The walk home was miserable, I had to limp all the way b/c it was hurting. When I got home, I iced it and then went straight to bed and elevated it all night, hoping that it would be better by morning.

Thursday, May 5th - I woke up and was pleasantly surprised that I was able to stand up and put weight on my foot. It was still sore, but no longer a shooting pain. I was so relieved. (Mainly b/c you can't exactly stay off of your feet here. Our feet are our mode of transportation.)

I had such a productive morning! I sat up in bed and was able to have some quiet time to read, study, and pray before Eric got up and started stirring. I love the early morning here, it is so peaceful. After breakfast, I started cooking a chicken. Basically you buy whole chickens here. I've been so proud of Cindy and myself. We have learned how to cook a whole chicken and debone it. Now, I know it's not hard, but neither of us had ever done it before last week. I always bought boneless, skinless chicken breasts in the US at the grocery store, but we don't have that option here, so we are learning to do it the "old fashioned way."

Anyway, once I got the chicken started, I swept the whole house and did 2 "loads" of laundry. Then it was time to debone the chicken. It took a while. While I was working on that, I heard someone outside talking to Aaron and I went to meet whoever it was. It was John Oscar and John Killman. Aaron had met them last week and they came to see him. (John Oscar is 19 and John Killman is his cousin. John Killman is a teacher at a secondary school and is probably in his early 30's.) I went and got Eric and introduced them. They stayed for about two hours talking with Aaron and Eric. John Killman asked a lot of questions. He is a Seventh Day Adventist and hasn't really been taught much Bible. He wanted to know all about the church. Eric answered his questions and taught him a little about the church and following only the Bible. John Oscar reminds Eric and me of Jesse (one of the men converted when we were in Santo last year). He didn't say much, but he sat and listened.

After I met them and talked for a few minutes, I went back to deboning the chicken. About 30 minutes later I heard a voice outside say "halo." It was Ure. She and Goman had come over so Goman could sign something and she said she came to stay with us until we left to go to Rose Hannah's. Ure visited for a few minutes over here and then went to Cindy's to play with Kaela until we were finished making the lunch we were taking to Rose Hannah's. After I finished in the kitchen, I freshened up (believe me, I needed it) and we started walking to Rose Hannah's. I stopped at Lissie's house to see if she wanted to come with us. She couldn't because she had to leave for work in less than 30 minutes. But Jacqueline (her aunt) was in town from Eton and came with me to Rose Hannah's. She is in town b/c her 13 year old daughter has a boil and needed to come to the doctor. On the way to Rose Hannah's I told Jacqueline that it was not good that Lissie had to work on Sundays. She said "Yes, I know, she needs to tell her boss that she wants to work on Sunday afternoons instead of Sunday mornings." I will try to encourage Lissie to do just that.

Ure led the devotional time with the ladies. We sang several songs, had a song, had a prayer, and then Ure shared some thoughts from Proverbs 2, 3, and 7. She said that these verses encouraged us to live a righteous life. After we finished, we started setting dates for visiting the Christian ladies in Epau and Eton. Cindy and I wanted the ladies to do the teaching, but Ure said that since we had just moved here, the ladies would want to hear something from us. Once we had spoken once, the others would take their turns too. That was fine with us. We are happy to share a lesson from God's word with the ladies. I will teach in Epau in June and Cindy will speak in Eton in August. Then, when we all meet together in June we are going to ask Rebecca or Salome (from Eton) to teach.

We decided to not make a schedule for visiting people. Instead, we decided that we should go visiting when we know there is a need (as it comes up). For example, Rebecca's mother is in the hospital, so we are going to visit her tomorrow.

When we got home, we all took a little rest. Some days are so hot here that if you don't take a rest in the hot part of the afternoon, you will wear yourself out really quick.

Tonight we went to Todd and Antony's for dinner. They grilled steaks and they were so good! We really enjoyed visiting with them. We're glad that they came. They have worked so hard on getting some details "ironed out" about the building while they have been here. We are so blessed to have brothers who are so concerned with the growth of the church in Port Vila. (They completely understand the need for a building in Vila. It isn't just a physical need that they are meeting by working on the building, but a spiritual need too.)

Friday, May 6th – This morning Ure, Cindy and I went to the hospital to visit Rebecca's mother. Rebecca is Morris' wife (from Eton). When we got there, I was reminded of what a different world we have moved to. It's not that the hospital is scary, but it is a world away from the hospitals in the US! We found Rebecca and greeted her mother (she was in and out of sleep). We talked for a while about her mother's condition. She is not doing well, and Rebecca started to tearing up while we were talking about it, because she thinks that her mother may not make it through this. Of course, that made Ure, Cindy and me cry too. We love Rebecca dearly and it was hard to see her hurting like this. Ure asked me to say a prayer for Rebecca and her mother. My voice was still weak with emotion, but I tried to pull it together and I said a short prayer for Rebecca's mother and her family. Rebecca appreciated us coming to visit. We left there and went down the wing to see Melinda (Jacqueline's daughter who has a boil). She is in pain. We visited for a while and then Cindy led a prayer for her to heal quickly. I am glad that we went. It was a good way to show we care. Ure did most of the talking which is nice b/c Cindy and I were new to this. We did what we knew to do though. We hugged our sisters, held their hands and prayed with them.

When we got back, we visited with Rocco Pierce. He just got to Vanuatu last night and leaves Vila to go to Ambae (another island in Vanuatu) tomorrow. He works all over the Pacific – he is from Tennessee and comes in and out of the Pacific several times a year. He has been working in the Cook islands recently. I think he taught the first converts on Ambae several years ago. Anyway, we didn't know he was coming, but we were glad that we got to meet him on his way through. It is always good to meet fellow workers for the Lord in the Pacific islands. He had some things to do in town, so he left and said he'd be back tonight for dinner. We'll be glad to have him.

Eric and I went to see Shem and Rose. We were worried that they might be having some struggles and thought that a visit would help encourage them. When we got there, lots of people were sitting around talking. I went inside to visit with Rose and Eric stayed outside to talk to Shem and the other men gathered around. It was a nice visit. I was glad we were able to go see them. I think they appreciated it. I invited them to come tonight and they said they would.

When I got home I swept and cleaned up around the house. Then I started cooking for tonight. Lissie came at about 5:30 (early!) and she and Cindy helped me finish getting things ready for the dinner. Mike, Rocco, Antony, Todd, Goman, Ure, Moses and Seselo (their kids) came at about 6:00. A few others came later - Morris, Bob Saul (Morris' son in law), and Kal (one of the twins). It was a good crowd. (Shem & Rose and Stephen & Rose Hannah didn't come for some reason.) We all enjoyed ourselves. We ate, talked, talked, and talked some more. Lissie, Ure, Cindy and I spent a good hour talking after some of the others left. Lissie

shared that she knows that since she hasn't been able to come worship on Sundays that she is growing spiritually cold. She knows that she needs the strength and encouragement that we gain from meeting together regularly. She wants to propose a solution to her boss. She said that she is the only one who works there who doesn't have a family and that is why she has to work on Sunday mornings (so the other ladies can go to church with their families). But, she is going to ask her boss to start a rotation so that all of them have to take a turn (that would be better – then Lissie could come at least every other week). She did say that she can come on Wednesday nights, but that she hadn't really known about it before. It was good to hear that she has the desire to be with her Christian brothers and sisters. We all had a nice visit.

Everyone left and Mike and the Bakers stayed to help us clean up. That was a big help (I think Eric and I would have been up pretty late if they hadn't stayed to help).

Saturday, May 7th – Woke up at 4:45 so we could leave for the airport by 5:15 to see Rocco, Todd, and Antony off. We arrived at the airport before it was even light! It was nice to be able to see them off though. We wanted Rocco to know that we would be praying for a successful trip. We also wanted Todd and Antony how much they had encouraged us and that we appreciated their efforts for the church in Port Vila.

When we got home, Eric needed some more sleep, so he took a short nap. I had a nice quiet morning of reading and studying. We left for Moses' soccer game (Goman and Ure's son) at 9:00. He plays for Fres Wata (where they live in Vila) in an under 20 league. We got to Mele (a village right next to Vila where he was to play the game) but didn't see him on the field. We weren't sure we saw him on the sidelines either. We decided to stay anyway and watch the game. It was a good game, but they sure do play rough here. I'm surprised more people don't get hurt. Once the game was over and we didn't see Moses, we left to go back home. It was a little disappointing, but we will try to watch him again another time.

I spent the afternoon typing emails and my journal. Bob Saul came by to visit with Eric and Aaron this afternoon. While he was here he told them that the bananas on our tree were ready to be cut down. He also told them how they can tell when they are ready to be cut down so they won't ruin. After Bob Saul left, Eric and Aaron walked to the store and bought a machete so they could cut the bananas down. It was the first produce from our tree and we were pretty excited about it. They cut the bananas down and then, being men, they proceeded to cut down everything else in our yards that they thought needed "chopping" (i.e. dead banana leaves). Cindy, Kaela and I enjoyed watching them have fun with their new machetes.

Sunday, May 8th – What a great Lord's Day we had today. The place was full today. I was glad to see everyone there. Stephen preached a good lesson. It was about being free in Christ (no longer under sin's bondage). He preached in Bislama. I understood the majority of it, but I must admit that I didn't understand all of it. It was a good lesson nonetheless.

After worship the men met to discuss several issues. The ladies and children went outside under a large tree and sat and talked. It was so relaxing and enjoyable. I love being with the Christians here. I feel so welcome and comfortable.

Shem and Rose brought several pineapple "heads" so they could plant them at our house. So, we walked to our house and Shem showed the guys how to plant them. They said that depending on the soil, it would take 1 to 3 years to produce. (That's a long time, but it'll be worth it! We LOVE pineapples.) We really appreciated them giving us the plants and teaching us what to do with them. They are such a sweet couple. Before they left we gave them the bananas that we had cut down the day before. We told them that they had come from our tree and they were pleased to receive them.

I guess planting the pineapples inspired the guys because they dug up the flowers that were in our garden and replanted them in the front of each house. They then cleared the garden so they can plant vegetables tomorrow. (They borrowed a shovel and "stake" from Stephen – it sure is nice to have them so close.) We are all excited about having a garden. Eric and I have really never grown anything, so it will be quite an adventure for us

I spent the afternoon typing my journal and cleaning up around the house. In the late afternoon Eddie stopped by to see us. He had been at the hospital visiting his granddaughter Melinda (Jacqueline's daughter).

He just wanted to say “hi.” We love that people are just dropping by to say “hi” when they can. That is exactly what we want people to do.

This evening Aaron and Cindy went into town to celebrate mother’s day. Eric and I kept Kaela so they could enjoy a quiet dinner and night out. It was great for us too - we love having Kaela. We had a fun evening with her. She sure is a sweetie! She is getting such a personality and is a delight to be around.

Monday, May 9th – Cindy, Kaela and I walked to the grocery store this morning. The guys walked to town to buy seeds for the garden, go to the bank, check on getting duty-free status for some things that are coming in the crate, etc. After Cindy and I had gotten all the way to the grocery store, I realized that I had forgotten my grocery money, so I had to turn around and go back to get it. That’s okay, at least it was good exercise. We did eventually get the shopping done. When we got home, Eric had a surprise for me. He had bought me a mat. (We had been wanting one - everyone has mats in their homes b/c many times people sit on the floor.) That was a nice surprise. He has always been very thoughtful. I appreciate him.

This afternoon Eric and Aaron planted the garden (tomatoes, green beans, 2 different kinds of melons, carrots, peppers, and cabbage – and of course the pineapple that Shem helped us plant). We are going to plant corn if we can find a place. We also want to plant peanuts and potatoes, but have to have a “starter” plant, so we have to wait for those. It should be a nice garden with variety and plenty for both families. We will definitely enjoy the fruits of their labor!

Tuesday, May 10th – Another eventful day today. This morning Rachel came. She is going to come one day a week to help Cindy and me around the house. We both thought that we wouldn’t need help, but housework here takes longer than housework at home ever did. Partially because we have tile floors all through the house, so they must be swept every day and mopped regularly too. Also, without a washing machine, laundry could be a full time job it seems. (We do have one coming in the crate though, so that will help.) Also, we found out that it is “expected” that we have help. It is a way of helping the local economy and is very common. Stephen and Rose Hannah have a “house girl” that comes every day. So, Cindy and I are trying to get used to the idea. The good thing is that with her here every week, in our homes, we are able to get to know her, be a living example for her, and eventually teach her the gospel. We already began “planting seeds” today. We know that God will open doors in the future with Rachel and allow us the opportunity to share the gospel with her. She is a sweet young lady and we are glad to have found her.

Cindy, Kaela and I went to Rose Hannah’s to meet with the ladies. When we got there, Ure told us that Rose Hannah was going to have to work through her lunch hour, so she wouldn’t be there today. That was okay. We decided to go ahead and start singing b/c it didn’t look like Rose was coming either. We sang several Bislama songs (and were able to ask Ure what certain words/phrases meant since it was an informal time). I love singing from those Bislama song books. Ure asked if anyone had a scripture to share and Cindy said that she did. She tried to do her talking in Bislama and didn’t do a bad job. Of course, none of us can express our thoughts as eloquently as we could in English, but at least she was able to communicate and she tried. I was proud of her effort. Elizabeth (Stephen and Rose Hannah’s house girl) sat and sang and listened too. I was glad to have her there. She is not a Christian, so it is always good when she joins us. Sometime (when I can communicate better in Bislama) I want to sit down with her and study the Bible.

We were about to eat when Rose walked in, so we sang some more songs and prayed (we didn’t want her to have to miss the encouragement that comes with that). We ate and visited. It is getting easier and easier to understand what is being said and to be able to know how to respond. Don’t get me wrong, I have not mastered, nor do I pretend to have mastered the language, I am just saying that I am getting more familiar with it.

We talked about starting a children’s Bible class. Stephen had actually suggested it when the men met on Sunday. When they decided to have an adult Bible class starting in June, Stephen said we needed to have a children’s Bible class too. Goman said that the ladies should plan it and talk about it on Tuesday. We did just that. The ladies decided to do a rotation. We are going to have two women teach for a month, one of those two will continue the next month with a different lady. Then, the second lady will stay on for the next month

and teach with another lady. It sounds confusing, but it's not when it is all charted out. We all think it will work well. Each woman will teach twice in the next 6 months. (Most will teach two months in a row.) Anyway, we thought that carrying over a teacher will help keep a little continuity for the kids and for what is being taught. I know Cindy and I are really excited about it and I think the other ladies are too. Those kids really need to learn. Right now, they aren't really learning anything, Bible wise, because they usually don't stick around when the men start teaching. So, I am glad that we are starting this. We have to think about the future of the church. These kids are the future – but not if they don't learn and grow in their understanding of God's word.

We walked home and saw that Morris had come to visit the guys while we were at Rose Hannah's. (Last week he just sat outside while we had our study time. This week he said he wanted to sit inside, so he came to our house to see the guys – and sit inside to visit.) We found that the resident spider (I had named him "Fred") who lived outside our back door, had gotten off his web and was on our door! Cindy and I were about to freak out (it was a big, scary looking spider)! Morris just picked it up, took it outside, dropped it on the ground, and stepped on it! We couldn't believe it. He was laughing at us – he thought it was pretty funny that we were so scared. It's not like the spiders here are poisonous, but they are still big and scary looking to me! I am not a big fan, that's for sure.

Eric and I had planned to go to town this afternoon, so when Morris left, we walked with him to the main road and then told him we would probably see him the next day at Stephen's – Wednesday night Bible study. Eric and I walked to town – we stopped at this high point on the way and I was able to see Vila Bay and some other things. It really helped me to kind of get a "bird's eye view" of that part of the city. I am not very good with directions (N, S, E, W) even in the states (when I had the mountains to help me), but I am especially not good here. So, that view helped me get a better picture. I was glad that we were able to stop and look for a while.

In town, Eric needed to check with the Customs guy about the stuff that we wanted exemption for in our crate. He was out so we had to check back several times before we got him. In the mean time, we walked around to several little shops and saw a few people we have come to know. Eric saw Clement (a guy he met when he was here in March) and introduced me. Clement was very glad to see Eric – in fact, he saw him from across the street and ran over to greet him. We talked for a little while and Eric found out how to get in contact with him. That will be good b/c Eric thinks he will study in the future. We also saw Kal and Manu. Manu spotted me across the road and waved, so I walked over to shake his hand. (Anytime you see someone you know, you shake hands.) They had just come from studying at the library. They are starting to warm up to us I think. They are sweet young men. I really think that they will be great leaders in the church someday, they just need some training and confidence boosting.

When I was in town, I was reminded of how "American" I think. When we saw Kal and Manu, they were just sitting there. To an American mind, it would seem that they were wasting time. But, that is just the island way. It doesn't seem to bother anyone to just sit. I am really trying to get used to that mentality. It will take some time, but I think I will eventually learn to just sit and enjoy those around me and the world around me. There is always so much to do, and I want to use my time wisely. But I need to learn from the Ni-Vanuatu people that it is okay to "stop and smell the roses" every once in a while.

When we got home, I fixed dinner (steak and potatoes) and we relaxed for a little while. I have been reading "Sojourners" again. I read it when we were still in the US. Nancy and Kent Hartman suggested that we read it before we leave, when we first get here, and then again after we had been here for a while. It is about culture, adjusting to a new culture, etc. It is really good. I had forgotten a lot that it said. It is "right on the money" in many ways. Some of the things that it points out are exactly what we are going through right now as we try to adjust. The team spent some time together this evening. It is always nice for us all to be together.

Wednesday, May 11th – I got up and did some laundry. I decided it was time to wash our sheets (I have been avoiding it b/c they are hard to hand wash and wring out). But, it ended up being easier than I had expected (that is until I got to the clothesline and realized I needed about 2 more hands to help me hold it up and pin it at the same time). I succeeded in getting it all hung up and was ready to get on with my day.

Cindy and I walked into town to talk with some private doctors. It turns out that there are only 3 in town. We talked with the French one (his name is Jean Luc – very French). He was nice. We are going to try to go back to town tomorrow to talk to the other two doctors (they were busy when we were there today). One of them is a Ni-Vanuatu man and the other is from Tuvalu (which is another island country in the Pacific - I think). Anyway, we are both feeling better about the whole situation. (Although, a visit to the hospital is still kind of scary to think about!)

Cindy and I stopped by SeaView takeaway to try and meet Yoland (Randy English met her last time he was here – he said that she was interested in studying the Bible and wanted us to meet her). We had tried a couple of times before to meet her, but we had gone during her “off” shift. So, today we were hoping to catch her at work. She was there today. It was so nice to meet her – she is a sweet young lady. We asked her if she wanted to have a Bible study with us and she said that she did. We set up a time and place to meet. We decided to meet on Friday in the park by the ocean. We are glad to have made contact with her and that she wanted to study with us. We are looking forward to it.

It was a beautiful day today. There was a nice breeze blowing and it wasn't near as hot as it has been. It sure was a nice change (especially since I walked to town twice today). On the way back from my second trip to town, Eric and I stopped at the park that is close to our house (Independence Park) and watched part of a soccer game. It was an adult league – it is interesting that they were playing right in the middle of the day. It was nice to sit in the shade and just watch.

We found out today that we were denied duty – free status (exemption) for our vehicle and copying machine. That is a major disappointment, as it would have saved us literally thousands (as much as 10 thousand) dollars. But, we have to take things as they come. We did raise enough money in case we didn't get the duty-free status. It is just a let-down for all of us. The guys are going to meet tomorrow to try and determine the best plan of action from here.

Afternoon was spent working on a Bible study and typing in my journal. After dinner we went to Stephen and Rose Hannah's for Bible Study. We arrived at 6:00 and it was only us, Stephen, Rose Hannah and Morris. (Actually Stephen was laying down when we go there – he just found out today that he has kidney stones! He is in pain.) We just sat and talked, waiting to see if anyone else was coming. Goman, Ure, and Seselo showed up at about 6:30 and Shem and Joel (the guy he's been studying with) showed up soon after. Then, Kal and Jacqueline came in and we started. We sang several songs from the Bislama song book and Eric shared a short lesson. He encouraged all of us that we need to work together so that every person in Vanuatu can hear the gospel preached. After the Bible study we all sat around and talked. It was a great time of fellowship. There sure was a lot of laughing going on! We all have such a good time together.

Thursday, May 12th – I spent the morning preparing for the Bible study with Yoland tomorrow. I am going to teach this time and Cindy is going to teach the next woman we have a study with. I am going to start with why we must follow the Bible only. We'll study how God has chosen to communicate to man today (through His word). Because He doesn't speak directly to us today like He did in the OT, we must rely on His word to know what He wants us to do. I think this is a good place to start. Without a proper respect for the Bible as God's word, we cannot ever convince someone of their need for following it.

The guys met this morning to try to make some decisions about the car situation. It's a difficult decision. We want to do what is best, but we don't really know what that is right now.

Cindy, Kaela and I walked to town to try and talk with the other 2 doctors. They were available this time. We met first with Dr. Spooner (from Vanuatu) – he was a sweet and gentle older man. He was very quiet though. It was hard to really talk with him. The other doctor – Dr. Tulimanu (from Tuvalu) is the only one of the three who delivers babies. He was great. Cindy and I both felt really comfortable with him. We both left with a great feeling about the three doctors (knowing that we could go to any of the three of them and feel comfortable). I am especially glad that we both like Dr. Tulimanu b/c he is the one who will deliver our babies when the time comes (and hopefully the time will come within the next 5 years!).

We met Mike and Eric at the food stalls for lunch (Aaron's not a huge fan of the stalls right now due to an unfortunate experience that he had not too long ago there). We all had steak and then came back home.

I spent the afternoon emailing (Yea-I can actually do it at home now!), preparing for dinner, cleaning up around the house (sweeping, kitchen, etc.) and working on the Bible study.

This evening the guys had a team meeting. During their meeting, Cindy and I cooked dinner. We ate and the guys shared what they had talked about in their meeting. We have decided to meet once a week, have dinner together, and then play games for some fun. It'll be a nice routine for us to get into. (I know soon enough we will all be going a million different directions and we will need that time for catching up on what's going on, prayer and strengthening.)

Friday, May 13th – Eric and I walked to the supermarket to get a few things. It's a nice walk. It's good exercise.

When we got home I reviewed what I was going to study with Yoland and finished preparing for that. Cindy and I left about 30 minutes before we were to meet Yoland. We got to the park and both said we hoped we remembered what she looked like (we had only met her once and that was very brief). We saw her walking across the park and she smiled at us. She brought her cousin with her. We sat under a tree, talked for a while and then began studying. It started to sprinkle, so we moved to a covered pavilion. It went really well. It is so nice to study with people in Vanuatu. In general, people are not defensive. I was able to share with her exactly what the Bible says. She listened and agreed. So many in today's world are quick to put their defenses up and resort back to "what I've always been taught" instead of just looking at what the Bible says and following it. Yoland was ready and willing to study and learn from God's word. She said that she wanted to meet again next week to study. We decided to meet Monday. She also said that she might go with us to the Ladies Bible study at Rose Hannah's on Tuesday. We are excited about studying with her. She seems to have an open heart – ready to learn.

After we studied the Bible, we walked over to the market to get a few things. Yoland's family is there with some others from Epau. Yoland introduced us to a woman named Susan who is a member of Christ's church out at Epau. It was good to finally meet a Christian from Epau. We enjoyed talking with her for a few minutes. After we met her, I bought some peanuts (raw – I love them raw) and a fruit that I can't even pronounce the name for. I had never seen one before. It was only 20vt, so I thought I would give it a try. When we got home, we sat in the baker's living room and talked for a while. I decided to try the "constabole" (or something like that) – it is all bumpy. To eat it, you break it apart, there are seeds inside – big black ones – and you eat the white flesh. It is really sweet – it kind of tastes like a mango, but not the consistency of a mango at all. It is kind of grainy. I gave Kaela some. She loved it. Sorry to go on about the fruit, but I had never seen anything like it. It was a new experience for me.

This afternoon when I was using the computer, I got up to go get something real quick, tripped over the phone cord (that was connected to the computer) and the computer went crashing to the ground! It was awful. I yelled (Eric was outside) and he came running in. He wasn't too happy, but being who he is, he didn't yell or get upset with me. He told me to get up so he could see if there was anything wrong with it. He ran a check on the hard drive and thankfully all was fine. There were a few "bumps and bruises" to the area around the screen, the keyboard and the latch that closes the lid. He tried to fix all of that and was pretty successful. Eric is proud of his computer for making it through that ordeal. He is completely convinced that it was b/c it is an Apple. (Mike Hite will be proud to hear that!) Anyway, it was a tough day. Like I said, Eric wasn't mad at me, but I felt horrible. I couldn't believe I had done that. I am clumsy, I know, but I usually am very conscientious of working with Eric's electronics. I must say that I am very proud of the way Eric handled the situation.

This evening as I was about to start cooking dinner, I heard Cindy speaking in Bislama to someone. I walked out to see who it was and met Lissie. She, Jaqueline, and Melinda came over to visit. They said that they were bored at their house, so they wanted to come see what we were doing and to talk with Cindy and me. It was a nice surprise. Neither Cindy nor I had planned anything big for dinner (leftovers mostly) but asked them to stay and join us anyway. We fixed what we had planned (didn't have a lot of meat though b/c we didn't have time to thaw it). Lissie and Jaqueline helped us in the kitchen by cutting up some oranges and grapefruit, buttering some bread, and helping us with the rice. We had that in addition to our leftovers. It

turned out to be plenty. The Bakers dragged their mat over to our living room and we all just sat on the floor and ate. We visited for a long time. It was such a pleasant evening spent with some sisters in Christ. We were happy to see them and glad to be able to share a meal with them too.

Saturday, May 14th – Wow – a month since we arrived! I can't believe how fast this first month has gone. In some ways it seems like we have been here for much longer. For example, we are all picking up the language (understanding a lot of what is said and being able to respond to it). Cindy and I have already formed some friendships with the ladies that we know will be lifelong friendships. We feel comfortable in town and with the church members. But, in other ways it seems like we just got here, For example, our house is still bare, we only have the things that were in our suitcases. We still see, hear, smell new things everyday it seems. Also, there are so many things we don't know yet, we still have so much to learn. But, this month, while at times frustrating (being immersed in a new culture always it) has been a wonderful time of adjustment and growth. Sometimes growth hurts, we have learned that this month already. Sometimes you have to just "play it by ear" b/c there is no way we could have prepared for all that we would encounter in this new place. But, through all that has happened in this first month of adjustment, we all know without a doubt that this is where we need to be right now, serving the Lord and teaching His word. This morning, after reflecting and spending some time studying, I did some laundry. About an hour after I started the laundry, it started raining. It seems like this happens to me often. But, I guess it gets me used to that so when the rainy season comes, I won't be taken by surprise! At least we have clothesline under the carport so I don't have to go take it down when it rains and put it back up when it stops. That's a blessing. It was such a hot day today! I can't believe the difference when there is no breeze! Two nights ago there was such a nice breeze that I slept in long cotton pants and socks! But today, with no breeze, I don't think I ever want to even talk about wearing pants or socks ever again. Ure and Jaqueline showed up at our house at about 11:00. Lissie came a little later. We all left to go to the hospital at about 11:30 (that's when visiting hours begin). We went to visit Rebecca and her mother again. We were pleasantly surprised to find that Leimal (Rebecca's mother) was alert and responsive. She responded to our touch and voices. We talked for a while and she looked around and listened. She even smiled at us. We were so glad to see such an improvement from the last visit. Ure said a prayer and we all left with a lighter heart. After the hospital, Lissie, Jaqueline and Ure came back to the house with us and we visited for a while and ate some oranges, mandarins, and greapefruits. Lissie and Jaqueline went home and Ure walked with us to the netball center. It was a long walk, but that's okay, we needed the exercise. We watched Akisa play netball. It looks like a fun sport. It is a common sport in the Pacific islands. It is a girl's sport. Akisa's team won and I was very impressed with Akisa's game. She did a great job. Cindy didn't get to enjoy it quite as much as I did – she was wrestling with Kaela. Kaela was ready for a nap about 15 minutes into the game. We stayed for the whole thing, but Kaela wasn't very happy about it – so Cindy didn't enjoy it too much. I look forward to going back again to watch Akisa play. (On Monday she will try out for the national team that will travel to Sydney this summer.) Overall it was a good day. I enjoyed spending time with Christian women. They have all been a blessing to me in this last month. They have really helped make this adjustment easier for both Cindy and me. They have been so patient with us in learning Bislama (in fact, they have been our teachers up to this point). They have also helped us in how we should act in certain situations – we watch and learn from the way they act. We have formed some precious friendships. I love them all dearly.