

From ^O_R Point ^O_F View

the Ladies of Mission Vanuatu

A Journal Excerpt by Cindy Baker (July 14th to August 14th)

Friday 7-15-05

Today was full of activity. Mainly unpacking but, also getting ready for Kaela's birthday party with our team tonight. At 11:00am Ure came to pick up Kaela and we took them back to Ure's house where Kaela will be spending the afternoon so I can get some things done. I worked all day and feel like I didn't even make a dent in all our unpacking. There are boxes and paper and stuff looking for a home everywhere! I also baked Kaela's birthday cake and marinated the fajita meat for tonight. At 4pm Ure called for us to come pick up Kaela. She had only taken an hour nap so I was a little worried about her happiness level but, she seemed to be pretty cheerful. She did great at Ure's, as usual! She always has plenty of playmates when she goes there to visit. When we came back Shawnda and I set to work making the flour tortillas for tonight. Our local grocery store used to carry them but, doesn't anymore. So, we are trying our hand at making them from scratch. It turned out to be pretty easy to do and they turned out good. The only downfall is that the recipe calls for Crisco shortening and that kind of soft shortening is unheard of here. Everything they carry at Nambatu supermarket is as hard as a rock and I have yet to have success cooking with it! Anyway, it was a fun party, Kaela loved her birthday cake, the candle and the singing! She got some fun b-day presents too...Aaron and I gave her 3 toys, Eric and Shawnda gave her a board with different locks and wheels and handles to play with (which she loved!) and Shawnda's parents, Papa Mike and Momma Nancy, gave her a new dress and a Cheerios play book. It was a great b-day party for her! Now, I am going to go fall into bed...I feel like I have been on my feet all day and I am exhausted!

Sunday 7-17-05

I spent yesterday unpacking and organizing and unpacking and re-organizing. My family and friends probably think I have dropped off the face of the earth, since I haven't checked my email for 3 days! I love organizing! Weezie calls it "fluffing your nest". Whatever you care to call it, I love making my house a home! Eddie called Eric yesterday morning and told him that Melinda (his 13yr.old granddaughter) would be coming to stay the night with us because she wanted to see Kaela. She came at about 6:30pm and stayed the night with us. We took her home to Eton Village tonight (Sunday) after our youth volleyball/devotional night. We had a good crowd for worship today, 25 in all, although not as many visitors as last week. I was supposed to study with Netasha and Aline this afternoon at 3pm but, they didn't show up. I don't really know why – once again I run into the island problem. I didn't have anyway to contact them to find out why they didn't come. I think tomorrow I will talk to Eric (he is studying with Aline's brother Alsen) and see if he will take a note to Alsen to give to Aline and Netasha. I really feel like they are interested and want to study – I don't think they are just "putting me off". With them being only 15 and 16 years old they could have easily had some family obligation that they needed to fulfill. Who knows. We will see what I can find out tomorrow.

Tuesday 7-19-05

What a day! Today, our plans were fairly ordinary. Go to town, go to the market and see Lissie and Edward who are here from Paonangisu, take Kaela to the Dr. to get an appointment for her one year vaccines and have the Dr. look at a small skin rash that she has developed. However...at 8:30am Gomon came by to tell us that he just took Ure to the hospital to be with Rose-Hanna. The time has finally come! So Shawnda and I hustled around to get ready, I left Kaela with Aaron and we headed to the hospital at 9am. We got there and Rose-Hanna wasn't in much pain. Her contractions were about 5 minutes apart but, sporadic and not coming too strong. So we waited and talked and walked

around with her as they continued to progress. The maternity ward was crowded and I soon found out why. When you have free medical care it doesn't matter when you come to the hospital and how long you stay --- it's all free anyway! So several girls were there who I assume had began dilating but weren't really feeling contractions. They were just walking around, killing the time, waiting for their labor to start. Also, Rose-Hanna told us that after you have your baby you have to stay 1 week for monitoring. I can understand why that is here in the tropics but for Shawnda and I it seems like an ETERNITY and we are hoping that the Dr. will let us come home earlier. We will see when the time comes! At 12:30pm Aaron came to get me because he had to go to North Efate and pick up Eddie, so he would be gone for a good 3 hrs or so. So, I went home to be with Kaela, ate some lunch, made dinner for Aaron and took some to the hospital for Shawnda and Ure, as well. While I was home, I called to Mike to see if he could come stay with Kaela while she took her nap. He said it wasn't any problem so he came at 2:30pm so I could go back to the hospital. When I got there, Rose-Hanna's contractions had progressed some. Shawnda needed to go home and cook dinner for Eric, Daniel and Flexon who were coming to study at 5pm. She was back in no time at all and it turned out that when she told Mike why she came home – he offered to cook her food for her! What a guy! So, she came back to the hospital and we stayed there with Rose-Hanna the rest of the time.

Ure had been there all day but, as it turned out she ended up helping a woman who is Gomon's Custom Sister (I'm not really sure what all that means). The woman, her name is Leah, was in labor pretty heavily and her husband hadn't come to be with her so she was all alone till Ure got there. It was a good thing Ure was there because she didn't have anyone else! We never found out why her husband never came to check on her but, she was in labor pretty hard and ended up having to get a c-section (sisa) because things were not progressing well for the baby. In the end, it all turned out well, she and the baby came through surgery just fine.

At about 5pm Rose-Hanna's labor started to get pretty difficult and at about 6:30pm they got her set up in the delivery room. The midwife checked her but, she wasn't ready yet so we were back to walking the floor in the delivery room and helping her through her contractions. Speaking of the midwife – there was only one midwife and one nurse on duty that night. I guess that is common for the nighttime. So it got a little...intense when Rose-Hanna was ready to push but we had to wait for the nurse to get finished with the other girl who just delivered a baby and come help us! But, it worked out fine. Rose-Hanna did great! I was so proud of her – here they don't use drugs in labor and delivery because they are too expensive so every one goes all-natural. Now her and Steven are blessed with a beautiful baby girl that as of tonight doesn't have a name. It was my first time ever to witness a birth and I found it amazing! I have a tendency to faint at the sight of my own blood and get a queasy stomach when I see gory things on TV but I did just fine. I wasn't queasy at all and I was really proud of myself! It was a great night and Shawnda and I were so excited to be able to experience it! It gave us a perfect idea of what it will be like to have a baby here in Vanuatu. And it really wasn't bad. Very different from the States, but not bad or gross at all.

Wednesday 7-20-05

Today I tried again to go to the Dr. to set an appointment for Kaela but, the office was closed over the lunch hour. As it turns out, I have to go with plan C. Tomorrow. Shawnda and I spent this afternoon going through Kaela's baby clothes and taking out a few items to give to some of the women that we met at the hospital that just had babies. Kaela was very blessed in having more clothes than you can imagine! So, I went through took out a few things to share with Rose-Hanna, Leah, Clara and Rahab. Leah and Clara we just met while we were with Rose-Hanna at the hospital. Rahab we have known for quite a while. She works at Nambatu supermarket and we used to see her every time we went grocery shopping. Of course I kept several things because I want to be prepared for my next baby! Shawnda and I will take our gifts to the hospital tomorrow morning, I think, and then head to the Dr.'s office.

Thursday 7-21-05

I finally got the chance to take Kaela to the Dr. this morning. I dropped by to make an appointment and he happened to be free to see her. We got one of her vaccines (the others will be ordered) and

he looked at the rash on her arms and legs. It turns out that it isn't a rash but that a mosquito just bit her several times over. Being that she is a small child, her skin is sensitive and so the bites were just mildly irritated. That was a relief to hear. He gave us a prescription for some cream that will help with the inflammation. Shawnda and I also made a quick trip to the grocery store this afternoon.

Friday 7-22-05

Today the weather started out very cool and very windy. The sky was overcast and I was sure that a storm was blowing in --- and I was right. At noon today Shawnda and I went to go get a much needed massage. One of the hotels in town offers massages at GREAT prices and Aaron and Eric had both given Shawnda and I massages as gifts. So we were delighted to have the opportunity to use them. We purposely waited till the gospel meeting was over and a lot of our unpacking was done. So we could be sure and get maximum relaxation for our tired and over-stressed muscles! I got a letter in the mail today from my Mom, which made me feel happy and sad all at the same time. That is the way it is when you live overseas, I think. I was so happy to get a letter from her but in a way it makes me feel homesick for her. That is okay though, I had myself a good cry and I feel better now. Tonight we had team dinner and game night. Always a great time. Afterwards, us and the Brandells watched one of our favorite flicks, Napoleon Dynamite. Yes, we know...a truly stupid movie but we think it is HALARIOUS!

Sunday 7-24-05

Worship was this morning and thankfully it was much quieter around Dumbea Hall. Today is Children's Day so many of the local churches don't meet so they can celebrate the day. This afternoon as I was waiting and wondering if Aline and Netasha were going to show up, I got a call from Aline. I had sent a note with Eric to Alsen. Aline said she was sorry they didn't come last week and they couldn't come today but they really want to study. So they asked if they could come tomorrow. I told her that would be just great for me and they are supposed to come at 9am to study. It took some schedule juggling because Aaron has a study with John Oscar at 8:30am tomorrow at our house. So I am going to study at the Brandell's, Shawnda will play with Kaela at our house in her bedroom and Aaron will study at our house in the living room. It takes some juggling but, I am glad that the Brandells live so close (right out our back door) and Shawnda is always so willing to help out when she can. Also, the weather has been surprisingly cool here this weekend. I only brought 2 sweatshirts with me and gave one to a girl in the maternity ward who was freezing on Tuesday night. I have been wearing pants, my sweatshirt, and drinking hot drinks...I never thought that would happen!

Monday 7-25-05

This morning at 9am, Netasha and Aline came to study. They called yesterday to say that they couldn't come but wanted to come today instead. That worked out fine for me so we studied the difference between the Old Law and the New Law. The study went really well! They seem to be very interested in studying and that is encouraging. They aren't sure when they can study again this week so they will call me to let me know.

Today Shawnda, Kaela and I did our grocery shopping, although we have to go back again tomorrow morning to buy our meat. The meat counter closed at 11:00am because today is a holiday. I wanted to watch a movie this afternoon while Kaela was sleeping. However, when I went to put it in the VCR I found that our VCR isn't working. What a drag! It's a bum deal because we brought all our VHS tapes (and DVDs) with us for entertainment and if our VCR doesn't work that really stinks!

Today is Children's Day in Vanuatu. From what I gather it is just a day to honor children and there is parade and games. You also are supposed to make your child's favorite foods and do things to make the day special for them. I know that is kind of a vague description but, that is all I can get from what they do for the holiday. This week is Independence week for Vanuatu. 25 years of Independence and there are all kinds of celebrations going on! Independence day isn't actually until the 30th but, in Vanuatu they celebrate all week before Independence Day. Should be an interesting week...we will see what goes on.

Tuesday 7-26-05

Today Shawnda and I had to go buy our meat at Nambatu supermarket. Shawnda drove our car there and did a great job! She is trying to improve her skills at driving a stick shift. My Dad taught me how to drive on a stick shift and he always said that if you learn on a standard you will always know how to drive one. It is a lot harder to learn on an automatic and then try to learn to drive a standard later. I think he was right. Shawnda learned on an automatic and while she knows how to drive a standard, she needs to practice so she can be confident in her driving. This is a great place to learn because there isn't much traffic. Anyway she did a good job and we will practice some more later. Afterwards, she and I went to town and ran a few errands while Kaela was taking her nap. Then we came home, made our food to take to Women's Bible study, got Kaela and went to Bible study.

Wednesday 7-27-05

This morning I threw in a load of laundry, primarily baby clothes. After doing my morning chores I started working on my Bible class for next month. Each of us ladies are taking 2 months where we will teach Bible class. I am actually looking forward to my two months. Rose is my helper next month (although she has a lot of health problems and that doesn't make her the most reliable helper, but that is all right). Then, Ure is my co-teacher in September. From what we have learned Bible class here is very simple. We sing and pray, have the lesson and a small activity or take home. That is a real relief (work wise and budget wise). Office supplies to make take-homes and visual aides are very expensive here and not something that most of the locals can easily afford. Shawnda and I are trying to keep it simple and follow the lead of the other women. I also worked on my next Bible study for Netasha and Aline. We will study the authority and inspiration of the Bible.

Thursday 7-28-05

This morning I worked on my Bible study again. I am trying to transfer my notes for the study from my NAS Bible to my NIV Bible. I like the NASB because it is a very accurate translation but, sometimes the words are hard for the locals that we study with to understand. The NIV is an easier translation to read so I am planning to start using it when I study with locals and having them read out of it, as well as the Bislama Bible.

Kaela has learned all the wonderful things that a pocket bib can bring. You know, the bibs that have a pocket at the bottom to catch any food that doesn't make it in the mouth. Now after she eats she opens up her pocket and "Oh, the wonderful things that she finds inside!" It makes for such a happy time for her. Aaron and I just roll our eyes and laugh at her. Tonight we had leftover poppy seed chicken for dinner. I also made fresh green beans and biscuits. Snapping and washing those green beans reminded me of childhood and how on green bean canning day I would sit at the table in our kitchen and snap green beans for what felt like forever. My biscuits ended up turning out pretty good, although I am still having trouble with my oven. It doesn't have a temperature listing on the dial just the numbers 1, 2 and 3. I have no idea what that means. As best I can tell 1 is low – maybe 200 or 250 degrees. 2 seems to be about 300 or 350, and 3 is...I'm not sure. I tried to cook my biscuits on 3 hoping that it was close to the 450 that they needed to cook at, however, I ended up cooking them twice as long and cranking the knob as far as it would go to get them done. I'll have to keep my eye out for a temperature gauge I can put in my oven.

Today we received two packages in the mail! One from my sister, Jill and one from my best friend, Rebekah. Jill sent an alphabet scrapbook that she made for Kaela for her birthday and Rebekah sent a ball for Kaela to play with, some candy for Aaron and I and recent pictures of her two beautiful children. What a great day! One funny thing did happen with Jill's package...she sent a picture in it and when Aaron saw it he asked when the picture of me was taken at Jill's house. Then he realized it was a picture of Jill, not of me! Shawnda said she thought the same thing and we all had a good laugh. After I opened the package, I went to read Kaela's b-day card and on the back Jill said she was sent this picture and when she first got it back from the developer she wondered why I was in it! Ha! Ha! It was the same picture of her and she thought it was a picture of me too! Funny, funny.

Friday 7-29-05

Tonight the guys went to watch a boxing competition that was part of the Independence celebration. They left at 6pm and didn't make it back home until after midnight. While they were gone Shawnda and I had a movie-a-thon. We watched the end of one movie we had started the other day, I put Kaela to bed, and then we watched 2 more movies and the beginning of another! What a great "girl time"! The guys came home and apparently really had a good time at the boxing competition. They said there were about 200 people there and it was crazy! The funny thing was...of those 200 people they were the only white guys! I guess some of the organizers thought it was pretty neat that they came and asked Mike to present one of the medals! They had quite a lot of good stories to tell about that night when they got home!

Saturday 7-30-05

Today is Vanuatu's official Independence Day – even though they celebrate all week! 25 years of independence! Aaron and I went down to the park where they were had all the booths set up and there had to be close to 2000 people there! It was packed! I have never seen so much food in one place! People had booths set up all over (maybe about 50 different ones) and they were serving food in every single booth! It was quite the celebration. We didn't stay too long because it was getting close to Kaela's naptime.

Tonight Aaron and Eric tried twice to go to the boxing competition again tonight. It was supposed to be adult boxing night tonight. Yesterday was kids boxing and 2 adult matches. But, for some reason there wasn't a match going on (even though it was on the schedule in the paper). Shawnda and I finished the movie from last night and started another one but, didn't get to watch it all because they came home about 15 minutes after their second effort at going to watch the match.

Sunday 7-31-05

Every month I say the same thing. I can't believe this month is over. It has flown by! I never thought time would go so fast while living here! We were supposed to have youth volleyball at our house this afternoon but, it kept raining so we had to cancel it. That was kind of a relief for all of us because it has been a busy week and I think we were all happy to just take a nap and relax all afternoon. I reviewed my Bible study in hopes that Netasha and Aline would come this afternoon but, they didn't. I think tomorrow I will send a note with Eric when he goes to study with their cousin. I did that last time and it worked out good. The girls called me a couple days after they got the note. So, I am back to waiting. Tonight we and the Brandell's played Scattergories. I love that game! It is so fun to play!

Monday 8-1-05

Today is August. For the record 30 days till my birthday. I will be 27. Yikes. This morning Shawnda, Kaela and I went and picked up Ure and we all drove out to Rose and Shem's house to check on Rose. Shem told us yesterday at worship that she had a cut on her foot that got infected and it made her foot swell up really bad and she couldn't walk. That's a rough time for them because he has to carry her everywhere in the house. We went and checked on her and she said they were going to the hospital this morning to get her foot looked at. I am glad she will get some medicine because she was obviously in a lot of pain. I feel so bad for Rose. I think she wants to be more active but, she has a lot of health problems that keep her from being able to do much. Afterwards, we dropped Ure off at the market, came home, and I put Kaela to bed. When she wakes up, Shawnda, Kaela and I will then make our weekly trip to the grocery store.

Tuesday 8-2-05

Shawnda had a Bible study today at 12:30am so at 11:30am Kaela and I headed out to Women's Bible Study at Rose-Hanna's. It was a nice time, as usual. I talked with Rebekah (from Eton) about Ladies Day at Eton. I am scheduled to speak so I picked her brain about good topics to speak on. I had better get busy – I have 3 weeks to prepare my lesson – all in Bislama! It makes me a little overwhelmed to do it all in Bislama but, I am sure I can do it. I will just have to practice a lot. Just as

Kaela and I were leaving to come home it started sprinkling. I walked VERY, VERY quickly the two streets to our house. By the time I got home it was raining pretty good and 5 minutes after I was home it poured. I knew it was coming because I could see the rain on the lagoon behind the hospital. I was glad I left Rose-Hanna's when I did and not a moment later! When I got home the guys and Shawnda were in the process of copying and folding 2500 Bible Correspondence Courses. So I helped with that for a minute or two and then had to go put Kaela down for her nap. Afterwards, Shawnda and I worked up a plan of what to talk to the Bible class teachers about in Eton. Morris asked us to go to Eton to talk to their 2 Bible class teachers about how to better teach the kids class. So, we worked up a plan and will be going tomorrow morning to do that.

Wednesday 8-3-05

This morning we woke up to rain. Lots and lots of rain. It rained all night, which brought a small problem for our plans this morning. Shawnda, Kaela and I were supposed to leave this morning at 9:30, take Kaela to Ure's and then head to Eton Village. With all the rain I knew that our beautiful little Tico would never make it on the muddy roads. So Plan B was set into action. Eric agreed to take us to Eton in the truck (although it threw a kink in his daily schedule). I can drive their truck but, the pedals reach so far to the floor it is really not made for anyone less than 8 feet tall...okay...anyone that happens to be my height. Like I said, I can drive it but, it is hard. So, Eric took us. The road to Ure's was horrible! Mud and potholes filled with water everywhere! Of course, wouldn't you know that once we left the paved road and hit the gravel on the way to Eton it had rained very little and our little Tico would have done fine. We would have just had to take a small boat to get to Ure's house! Anyway, we got to Eton just fine. Eric dropped us off and not too long after we got there Anita, one of the Bible class teachers showed up. She said that Carolyn the other teacher couldn't come because she was in Vila for the week. Shawnda and I met with her for about an hour and went over some ideas for teaching Bible class. She appreciated them and was very thankful that we came to talk to her. Then we went to over to see Solomae (Rebekah's sister) and brought some food back to the building for lunch. Janet (Rebekah's daughter) came with 2 of her 7 (yes, SEVEN!) children and ate lunch with us too. Afterwards, we sang a couple of songs and at 1pm Eric arrived to pick us up again.

Tonight we went to Bible study at Steven and Rose-Hanna's. There was a small crowd...basically the faithful few. Our mission team, Steven, (Rose-Hanna was feeding the baby), Morris and Rebekah (who are still in town), Ure, and Flexon. We sang a few songs had a prayer and then we used the time to fold 2500 Bible correspondence courses and get them ready to put in post office boxes here in Vila. It turned out to be a great time of fellowship and we probably spent more time bonding and laughing as a group than we have since we have been here. Things really got funny when I showed Tamata (Steven and Rose-Hanna's nephew that lives with them) how to trap air between your clasped hands and squeeze it out – which makes a great little boy noise. Well then EVERYBODY started trying to make the same noise! It was so funny. After that we went through a wide range of different things you can do with your body (popping fingers, turning eyelids inside out, making popping noises with the mouth, and various other interesting things you can do with your hands). We did everything just short of playing the “Star Spangled Banner” with your armpit! It was the funniest thing ever! Especially watching Morris and Rebekah who are both usually very reserved trying to turn their eyelids inside out! I am laughing right now just thinking about it!

Thursday 8-4-05

Today started off as any normal day. I got up, put in a load of laundry, worked on the computer a while, Kaela woke up, I made breakfast, then Aaron and I got ready for the day. At 9:30am Ure came over. She was attending a 1hour workshop across the street at FSP (Foundation of the South Pacific). When it was over she came over to see Shawnda and me. We sat and talked for a while and talked about our plans for the day. Then Aaron and Eric came blazing in. Eddie's Grandson Stanley brought a letter to us that Eddie had written. He said that his wife's sister-in-law died and he needed to go to North Efate to the funeral and he wanted the three guys to go with him and possibly speak at the funeral. Well, that threw the day into quite an uproar. The details were kind of vague about the plan. Eddie called and told them to come to Eton at 1pm then they would go to Emau

(another island North of Efate) for the funeral. They were supposed to take rice and artificial flowers as gifts for the family. Aaron called Mike, told him the plan, and then they headed to town to buy rice and the flowers. We didn't know how long their trip would last or if they would be staying the night in Emau or what was happening. So I ran home, packed Aaron a bag of "just in case" things (toothbrush/paste, deodorant, a jug of water, a small first aid kit and some insect repellent. At 12:15 they left for Eton and we weren't sure when we would see them again.

Shawnda and I decided to go into town and do a little shopping for her family. They have birthdays coming up so we went to go do that. She, Kaela and I had a nice leisurely time shopping around town. We got home about 2:30pm and Kaela was ready for her nap. I laid her down and then worked on my Bible class for Sunday. At 4:45pm, Kaela woke up and she and I started moving things over to Shawnda's house. We weren't really expecting the guys home till well after dark so the plan was to eat dinner together at Shawnda's house, watch movies and wait for the guys. If it got to be 10pm and they still weren't home then we would move over to our house (because that is where Kaela's bed is) and stay the night there. We had the plan all laid out but, as it turned out the guys came home about 6:00pm. We all ate dinner together (since it was ready). Aaron was exhausted – any trip around the island is enough to wear you out! So we relaxed and played with Kaela all evening and then went to bed early.

Sunday 8-7-05

I did it again. I haven't journalled in three days and I am not even going to try to make up for the time. I can barely remember what I did today let alone try and remember what I did 3 days ago! Today started off not too good but, ended up being a great day. This morning Kaela's body was taken over by this monster child that was horribly fussy, cranky and difficult to deal with. I am not sure who she is but, I hope she is gone by tomorrow. I was scheduled to teach Bible class this morning and after services we were having a potluck so our car was loaded to the brim with all kinds of things to take to services. At 9:20 I still didn't have anyone in my class (which is not unusual for Vanuatu) but, then at 9:30 six kids showed up. Gomon's family brought 3 visitors with them and then I had Steven's two kids, Alfonia and Tamata. So I had seven in my class including Kaela. Bible class went really well. We began our first day of learning the books of the Old Testament. I sent each of the kids home with a list of the first five books and they are to memorize them this week and have them ready to recite next Sunday. We will see how that goes. They all seemed pretty excited about the challenge of memorizing them – especially the older kids!

I had about given up on Netasha and Aline wanting to study again because it has been two weeks since I have heard from them. After worship Aline's brother, Alsen (he studies with Eric) came and told me that they wanted to study today and would be over this afternoon. I was so excited to hear that! Also this afternoon we have youth volleyball at our house at 3pm. The potluck was great. It is similar to a potluck in the States except that the food is Island food (except Shawnda and I like to bring a few American favorites: corn casserole, popcorn and brownies). Each family brings enough plates, silverware and food for their family plus extra for the single people and visitors. First, the women make all the plates for the children, and then the men come through and get their food. After that women go through and get their food. This time I outsmarted the system! You know what it is like being at the end of the potluck line – sometimes the pickings are slim! Ure had asked me to bring corn casserole, so I did. I knew that after the men and children all went through the line that there wouldn't be enough corn casserole left to taste so I got smart! I split it up into two bowls! After the children and men went through I brought out the second bowl just for us women! Ure thought that was the funniest thing ever! And we were all happy because we got to eat corn casserole after all! Also after church Eric told us that Alsen said he was ready to be baptized. So, a bunch of us piled in Eric's truck and Gomon's family all piled in their truck (five of them plus 3 extra kids) and we headed to Malapoa point for the baptism. What a great day! Alsen is a really great guy – we are all so happy for him!

At 3:30pm Akisa and Moses (2 of Gomon and Ure's kids) along with about 12 of their friends came to play volleyball. Before they arrived, Eric came back from his study with Donald (Alsen and Aline's cousin) and said that Donald wanted to be baptized also. Donald is one of those people

who is truly excited about the Word. I don't know him very well but, from what Eric has said he is overjoyed to be able to look in the Bible and see the Truth for himself! So, we had another happy occasion today! Then at about 4pm Netasha and Aline came to study. We studied the Authority and Inspiration of the Bible. It was a good study, although I had a harder time finding the right Bislama words to use than I have had the past 2 times we have studied. But, they seemed to really like the study and we are scheduled to study again next Sunday afternoon downtown at the Seafront park. Also...Shawnda is studying with Donald's sister, Jennifer. Donald, Jennifer, Alsen, Aline and Netasha all live together with Alsen and Aline's brother, Alison (male – "Al-i-son"), and their oldest brother and his wife and three children.

After the kids all left and Shawnda and I took Netasha, Aline and Yoland home we came back and our team went out to dinner at the Wild Pig. They had a buffet there that was excellent and a real blessing because I don't think either Shawnda nor I were in the mood to cook. Potluck Sunday, 2 baptisms, a Bible study, and Youth night wiped us out! --- Oh, yes. I forgot today we started experiencing problems with our gas water heater. I don't know what the deal is, but it means boiling water for the next few days!

Monday 8-8-05

I am the big loser. Aaron and I had a hypothetical wager going...would Kaela like cucumbers or not? Aaron loves them and I hate them. And she likes them! So, I lose. I don't see how anyone in their right mind can like cucumbers. They are the most disgusting vegetable ever...next to lima beans. They are horrid. Truly. I am not exaggerating! I can find a cucumber in a large bowl of salad in a matter of seconds. The taste and smell is unmistakable and just one taste of a cucumber triggers my gag reflex. When I was a kid my family liked cucumbers in their salad. When Mom and Dad weren't looking, I used to throw them back into the salad bowl while we were eating. I just felt everyone should know how thoroughly I detest cucumbers. Cucumbers are only good for making into dill pickles and then I'd eat them all day. Next Kaela taste test: Tomatoes...I love them and Aaron hates the very thought of them.

Oh, yes. And what did I do today? I made great headway preparing for my Bible class on Sunday and my next Bible study with Netasha and Aline. In Bible class I am teaching Abraham sacrifices Isaac and next I am studying the Godhead with Netasha and Aline. I got a lot done today but, I still have quite a bit of work left to do. Aaron placed a call for a new gas tank to be delivered but as of yet, we haven't received it. This makes day 2 of showering at Eric and Shawnda's. Good thing they live right next door!

Tuesday 8-9-05

This morning during Kaela's nap Shawnda and I walked to town to get a few things at the market. I bought a head of lettuce, 2 tomatoes, and a lemon – all for fewer than 200 vatu (\$2)! I love these Vanuatu prices for in-season produce! We also shopped at the market for some locally made jewelry for my sister-in-law, Tera's b-day and Shawnda's sister's b-day. Then we came home and got busy cooking for women's Bible study at Rose-Hanna's house. I could have kicked myself this morning! When I got up I went in the kitchen and what was sitting on my counter? The yummy chicken stew I made last night for dinner! I had planned to take some of it to Bible study and then I made another bowl for Aaron's lunch. They were too hot at the time so I set them on the counter to cool...and the forgot about them! What a waste! But, what could I do? You can't win 'em all! Bible study was great today! Had a really good turn out – different from the usual four – Ure, Rose-Hanna, Shawnda and I. Rose-Hanna's house girl, Asneth(who Shawnda is studying with), Rebekah Felix (in town from Eton) and Yoland also came. It was a wonderful time of singing and fellowship! Shawnda gave a very nice devotional talk on Psalm 23.

Wednesday 8-10-05

Today is cool and rainy again. It has been cool and rainy since Sunday night. Today I just worked around the house and did a load of laundry and hung them out to dry. I wasn't convinced they would get dry by nightfall and I was right. So at 5pm I transferred my slightly damp clothes to our guest

room to hang dry. We had devotional this evening at Steven and Rose-Hanna's. I am not sure why, but the turnout was pitiful. Maybe it was the rain, that always seems to put a damper (pardon the pun) on things. We sang a few songs, had a prayer and finished folding the Bible Correspondence courses to put in the post office boxes here. Morris and Rebekah (from Eton) were the only attendees that weren't from the States. I also worked on my Bible study for Netasha and Aline.

Thursday 8-11-05

This morning I got up early. I woke up at 5:45 for some reason and couldn't get back to sleep so I figured I might as well use my time to my advantage. I got up, came over to the office and worked on my lesson for Ladies Day at Eton. Yesterday I finished typing it up in English and this morning I worked on translating it into Bislama. That is quite the task! I figure if I make a 5 minute lesson in English, by the time I translate it into Bislama it will be a good 10 minutes because it takes twice as long to say anything in Bislama as it does English! Today I also wanted to do some visiting.

I talked to Shawnda about it and we decided to go see a few people this morning. First, we went to town and visited Lissie. We haven't seen her in a while so we went to make sure she is doing all right. She is fine, she has just been working a lot and that is the reason we haven't seen her much. On Monday we found out that one of the girls that works at the supermarket doesn't work there any more. Her name is Shirley and she is really nice. We are used to seeing her a lot and have gotten to know her a little bit. The girl who took her place at the bag-check desk (the place where you leave your purse or any bags you are carrying before you go in the store) told us that she works at a Chinese shop in town. So, Shawnda and I went in search of the right store. We had a good idea what area in town it was in so we just asked around and it turns out that she works in our favorite Duty Free store! We visited with her a while and told her we would see her every so often because it is our favorite store to shop in. After that we came home to eat lunch. After lunch, we got Kaela ready and we went to the hospital to visit Rahab. I forget if I have mentioned her before but she is another girl that used to work at the supermarket bag-check desk. She had a baby about the same time as Rose-Hanna but, it came a little over 2 months early and is being kept in the incubator at the hospital. We have been visiting her every few days, taking her magazines and books to read since she is staying at the hospital till her baby gains some weight.

We talked with Ure and if it is sunny on Saturday we are going swimming. It will be our first time to go swimming since we have lived here. Almost 4 months on this tropical island and we have never been to the beach...what is wrong with that picture?! ...Too much to do!

Saturday 8-13-05

And we will be waiting another week or more before making to the beach because we woke up to gray skies and the promise of rain this morning! At about 9am the sky opened up and dumped what I am sure was God's entire storehouse of rain for the world on our back yard! I have never seen or heard that big of downpour! Usually if we have a good downpour it rains for 5 minutes really hard and then stops. However, it rained really hard for 30 minutes slowed down and started up again 30 minutes after that! We got a ton of rain...then the humidity set in. It is like a virtual rain forest outside – hot, humid, wet and sticky! Not that I have ever been in an actual rain forest but, they have a really good simulation of one at the zoo! Ha. Ha. ...You may be laughing at me but, you know what I mean!

Today was a great day for me! Aaron spoiled me by watching Kaela so I could scrapbook! After I finished my morning chores: make breakfast, clean-up breakfast, sweep, bathe Kaela, take my shower (Of course, our hot water heater didn't work this morning so I had to boil water for my dishes and for Kaela's bath but, Aaron got it fixed by the time I took my shower.) Anyway, when Kaela went down for nap, I headed over to Shawnda's and we started scrapbooking and watching movies. It was a great time because Aaron watched Kaela and I got to work on my "Who Loves Kaela" scrapbook that I am about four months behind on. It was a great fun day with all the rain – a good day for scrapbooking and movie watching! I guess it seems like we watch a lot of movies here. When you don't have any other form of entertainment – you watch movies because they are free! Yesterday I mentioned how fun it would be to go bowling. Since, that won't happen – I guess we will watch another movie!

Sunday 8-14-05

Today was kind of a depressing day as far as our mission work goes. I guess sometimes bad days are bound to happen and today was one of them for me. We were missing about 5 of our young Christians at worship and it just made me sad and frustrated. It is a problem here just like it is in the States, I know that is true. Things happen, something comes up and people don't come to worship God. I never really understood how my presence at worship could be an encouragement to other Christians. But, it is! (At least I hope so) It is just frustrating because you know if it were a sporting event or work they would make the effort - and not just the effort but, the POINT to be there! That's the truth of it! If you think it is important you will be there! And sometimes I see some of these young Christians, and I really believe that worship is only moderately important to them. They will tell you it is important but, if something else comes up...they stay up too late, their neighbors keep them awake, they have a headache, etc. - they aren't there! It is so frustrating because I feel like I have invested my heart in these people's spiritual lives - I really and truly care that they are growing spiritually! And if you aren't making a point to be at the only "set appointment" God makes with you - then what are you doing? Of course I am writing all this in my journal because I can't stand up and preach it! Then to top it off I walked downtown this afternoon for my Bible study with Netasha and Aline and they didn't show...and it rained on me on my walk home. So, today was a bit frustrating but I just have to keep plugging away. Next week is bound to be better - I just know it!

On the up-side...Eric and Shawnda went to Eton for worship because they were having a special dedication ceremony for Steven and Rose-Hanna's new baby. I guess it was very nice - Eddie talked about how Aleina (A-lay-na) was being welcomed by the local Church but, it is up to Steven and Rose-Hanna to raise her in a way that would help to grow to the point that she can make the decision to obey the gospel when she is older. They gave woven mats to Shawnda, Ure and I for being with Rose-Hanna during the birth of Aleina. It was so nice and thoughtful of them to do that for us.

I'm writing this on Monday but, just so you know - Aline came at about 4:30pm to study with me. She didn't come because of the weather and the roads going to her house. Netasha was with a friend but, Donald came to study with Eric so Aline walked with him. I was very appreciative that she made the effort to come - it is a long walk from her house to ours and the fact that they both walked all the way in the rain was very impressive. Our Bible study went well and it really brightened my day!