

Saturday 1-7-06 – I am playing one of my least favorite games today. It's called "Catch-Up". Aaron's parents arrived safely on December 15. We had the best time while they were here! However, my devotion to my daily journal was not what it had been. And boy am I am sorry. Now. I wasn't too sorry while they were here but, now that they have gone home and my last recorded entry was December 14, I am feeling a little remorseful.

On with the show. I while try to just highlight a few things from Dave and Nila's visit. I thought about the day they would arrive and thought about it and thought about it. We were all so excited! It was hard to believe they were really here the first few days. Aaron and I found ourselves trying to tell them everything in the first days just because we were so overly excited to see them! Their visit was our first chance to show our family what our lives are like here in Vanautu. So far our visitors have all been people who have been here before, but his parents were our first visitors that would be seeing Vanuatu for the first time ever. We wanted to make their visit a nice mix of a "tourists view" and a "locals view". As tourists we took them swimming, to the cascade waterfalls, shopping in town, to the market, out to a nice dinner (their treat-yea!), and to the museum. However, we wanted them to also experience the culture that we love so much. Aaron took his Dad with him on his trip to Paonangisu Village, we went to visit Etas, Eton, Epau and Paonangisu villages on our round island trip. We spent time in the company of locals and fellowshiping with the local Christians. Then we filled in the gaps with family time, playing games, talking and letting them enjoy Kaela to the fullest and spoiling her the way every kid needs to be spoiled by their grandparents – with lots of ice cream! I only highlighted a few things that we did, but them being here was such a blessing to our whole team and especially to Aaron, Kaela and I. We are so thankful that they had the opportunity to come! It was hard to put them on that plane back home, but I just keep reminding myself that Lord willing we will be back in the States in less than a year!

Mike's surprise b-day party, which was December 16, was a smashing success! As it turned out he was detained at his house and didn't arrive until about an hour or more after all the guests. We knew he was going to be late so we played Win, Lose or Draw to fill up the time. Finally, we saw him walking up the driveway. Ure just happened to arrive at the same time as Mike (she had been at a meeting) and he was so busy talking to her he didn't notice that we had decorations put up. It took him a minute to realize we were all yelling SURPRISE at him and it couldn't have been more perfect! He was thoroughly shocked! It was great!!!!

Christmas was wonderful for us! We stretched it out over a three day period. Eric and Shawnda were keeping Myrick, Paul and Miriam Vuhu's son, so we knew we had to schedule the present opening while he was at his aunt's house. I think he would have been a bit overwhelmed at the pile of presents that we had! So, we had present opening on Friday night before Christmas and stockings on Christmas day. We ate Fajitas for our Christmas dinner and opened the stockings afterwards. Shawnda made a stocking for Myrick and then filled it with some candy and a few toys and he really liked them all! Especially his water gun!

On Wednesday of this last week we all (Dave, Nila, Aaron and I) went out to Etas for our Bible study. Only this time we went knowing that we were going for a baptism. When we got there we found out that not only Sam and Pbles wanted to be baptized, so did Leimawa and Pbles' wife, Ruth. We were so excited! This is wonderful start for the church out at Etas. I am so happy that they all made this decision! Morris went with us and did the baptizing and afterwards we went back to Pbles' house, ate dinner and Aaron did a short Bible study. Aaron made arrangements to go pick them up on Sunday morning and bring them into town for Bible class and worship. We will do that probably through February so that they can have a chance to fellowship with the local Christians, strengthen their faith and also for the men to get some first hand teaching on how to conduct worship once they are back home at Etas. It is so exciting to us the possibilities that Etas holds now that we have an open door with

Sam's family! Another interesting and exciting thing happened while we were there. Ruth had made a grass skirt and feathers to put in your hair for Dave and Nila as a gift for them coming. It was also something for them to keep to remember the baptisms that they were able to share in. Before Ruth gave them the gifts she had me put on the grass skirt and she put the feathers in my hair. Then she put on her grass skirt and feathers and told me that she was going to show me how to do a custom dance from Tanna! I was so excited and a little nervous because I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do. Aaron and Sam had made a run up to Sam's house and when they came back, we started. Sam and Pbles sang and Leimawa, Ruth and I danced. Basically the custom dance was just stomping to the beat and then after while you jump up and down. I was pretty sure my legs were going to fall off by the time it was over! It was the neatest experience though! I had a great time! Liemawa and Ruth told me that next time they have a custom ceremony I can come and dance with the women from Tanna! I can hardly wait!

Sunday 1-8-06 – Happy Birthday Mom! :o) Okay, anyway...what a great day! Aaron left to go pick up the Etas group at 7:45am. I was expecting Sam, Leimawa and their 3 kids, as well as Pbles and Ruth. However, I was very surprised when Aaron pulled up in front of our house and all these people started spilling out of the truck! It was like a clown car! Sam and Leimawa came as well as Pbles and Ruth, and also 2 of Ruth's nieces (grown women), Annie and Rebekah. Then, they also brought with them 10 kids! It was a huge group! We were all so excited about this! It brought our attendance numbers for Port Vila up higher than they have been since we have lived here. I had 18 kids in Bible class and they all did really well. I will be interested to see how things turn out for Bible class in future weeks. The count for worship, including the kids added up to almost 50, I believe! Wow! Afterwards, we had our 1st Sunday potluck (moved to the 2nd Sunday because last week was a holiday). It was a wonderful time of fellowship and for the new Christians from Etas to get to know the local Christians here in Vila. I was very happy and very exhausted by the time everyone headed home. What a way to start off the year! Oh – also Joanna and Fiona (Flexon's girlfriend) were baptized on Thursday afternoon. 6 baptisms in the first week of 2006! God has a great year in store for us! There is much work to do here in Vanuatu and we look forward to the blessings that our work here will bring us!

Monday 1-9-06 – Today was grocery day so Shawnda, Kaela and I headed out for our usual shopping adventure. We left about 10:30, after kaela's nap, and went to Rainbow Gardens, the butcher and the chicken shop. Then we came home for lunch and then after lunch headed out again for Nambatu Supermarket. All in all it was a fairly routine and uneventful trip.

Wednesday 1-11-06 – Today has been quite the day. Opposite of Monday. Yesterday afternoon Winnie (from Epau) came to stay with Eric and Shawnda. Her brother is in the hospital so she is staying with them until Saturday so she can visit him and take him food. Aaron went out to Etas this morning for the Bible study. Sam came by yesterday afternoon also and wanted to know if we could come in the morning instead of the evening for the Bible study. I told him that would be fine. However, I had to stay home and take care of some things here.

While he was gone I found that I needed another loaf of bread so Shawnda and I headed to the grocery store to pick that up. And then it happened...the dreaded event. A guy backed into me. I pulled out of my parking space and was getting ready to leave the parking lot and before I could put it in drive I saw his huge truck backing up. He was only

about 3 feet away and my brain went through this lapse and quit working and I couldn't even think to honk the horn. So, instead Shawnda and I just did the logical, level-headed thing...we screamed. It was such a great, intelligent moment for us! Anyway, he slowly backed himself into my rear driver's side door, which put a lovely dent in it since he was driving this big huge truck. We all got out of our cars and inspected the damage. First, he asked me if I didn't see him backing up. And I said that, yes, I did and I was already in the road. So, Shawnda asked him if he looked behind him before he backed up...and what do you know – the answer was no. We were all fine and no one was hurt only now we have to figure out how to get our car repaired. The man doesn't have insurance so he has to pay for it personally, so that kind of stinks for him. We also are on the verge of selling our car so that threw a small kink in our plans to sell it right away.

Aaron and Shem ended up not getting back from Etas until 1:30. Then, when Aaron dropped Shem off, Rose (his wife) told him that one of her grandparents had passed away. Shem and Rose were scheduled to have the mid-week fellowship at their house tonight. Instead, Aaron told them we could have it at our house. So, when he got home, I got ready to go to the grocery store to pick up a few items for the fellowship. The fellowship went great and although we had a very small crowd, we had a lot of fun.

Thursday 1-12-06 – Aaron, Shawnda and I went down to the police station after lunch to file our report for the accident. It is a “just in case” thing to do. The man, Malakae (Malachi), came by to look at the damage and is thankfully owning up to the fact that he is at fault. However, being as he is, a local, and probably doesn't have a very high income, it will be interesting to see where this goes as far as payment for the damages to our car. Hmmmm...only time will tell, I guess. Tonight is anniversary celebration night for Aaron and I. We passed our 7th Anniversary on January 2. Since his parents were in town we postponed celebrating until tonight. Shawnda is going to watch Kaela for us and we are going out to dinner to James Mitchner's South Pacific Restaurant (he's the *South Pacific* writer) on Iiriki Island. Should be a fun evening and great food!

Friday 1-13-06 – Dinner last night was wonderful – very gourmet and the atmosphere couldn't have been better! What a great anniversary date night! Today was a busy day. I finished up some copying for Bible Correspondence Courses and for our Bible class on Sunday. I also graded BCC tests which always takes time. Tonight is team night and Shawnda and I are tackling quite the dinner project. We are making homemade chile rellanos. Nila and I made them when Aaron's parents were in town and they were so yummy that I just knew we had to make them for team night. (Since we just can't get enough Mexican food!) Aaron cleaned out the peppers for us after lunch and then at 4:30 we got busy in the kitchen stuffing them with meat and cheese, rolling them in batter and frying them. We made a very nice mess in the kitchen and they turned out great! It was quite the project, however, since we had to make enough for 6 adults. I guess we overshot it a little and ended up making enough for eight. But, that is okay – we'll just have the leftovers tomorrow! Then for our team night entertainment we decided to watch a couple episodes of *The Cosby Show*. (Eric and Shawnda got season 1 for Christmas). It was great! Much better than last week's team night when we had the great idea to play dominoes. Only we were all playing different variations of one game and ended up getting a little cross at each other (we are *such* a family). The domino game was a little annoying, but this week we all were laughing at our Domino night and how it ended in “I'm taking my double 12 and going home!” You have to be able to laugh – because if you don't you'll go crazy. A team works just like a family.

Sometimes you get annoyed, you get all mad and cranky and then you get over it, make up and have a great time together.

Saturday 1-14-06 – Today I saw something that I have never seen before. (Remember my “Hmmm...I’ve never seen that before” file? – This goes in it). Aaron and I were driving to Nambatu Supermarket when we passed a truck with about 4 or 5 people in back. One of the guys in back was using a bush knife (like a big machete) to try and open the gas tank cover thing...while they were driving down the road. Hmmm...I’ve never seen that before. While at the store I bought about 7 packages of cookies and one bag of chips for our “snack time” after worship tomorrow. We are having the last of the Revelation video series and will have snacks to tide everyone over before the video starts. I had to buy so much because I am expecting a large group from Etas to come to worship and none of them will know to bring a few snacks. I realize I frequently write about things I have cooked. And I am okay with that because being a Dietz, food is a large part of my life. Anyway, I cooked the best carrots tonight – sautéed – and they were so good and were looking like they came off the cover of a cookbook, in my opinion. I felt like Martha Stewart! – Only without the record.