

Shawnda's Journal
August 15th - September 14th

Wednesday, August 16th - I went to study with Leikavei, and for the second week in a row the roads were impassable. It's so frustrating. I don't feel comfortable leaving the truck and walking in (for one thing, it's the Baker's truck) - and I don't have any way to call her. I know she understands that I literally can't get the truck to her house, but it's still frustrating. I'll talk to her on Sunday and see if we can work something out. Since I didn't study, I went to town to check on a package. Thankfully, it was there today and they let me have it without any problems. I saw Daniel in town - who we haven't seen in ages. We talked for a while and I told him about the fellowship at our house tonight. He said he'd come - I hope he will.

This evening we didn't have a large crowd. But, that's alright. Daniel did come and he brought 3 friends. Donald also showed up. He has been really sick (an allergic reaction to something he ate, I think - his face is all swollen up and distorted). Ure was there and then Steven, Rosehanna and the kids came later. It was a good time, but as always we were disappointed that more didn't take advantage of the time of fellowship.

Thursday, August 17th - This morning I went early to Rema and Maybel's b/c we have ladies fellowship in the park at lunchtime. I always enjoy being with Rema and Maybel - now Winnie is joining us on a regular basis as well. We studied for about an hour and then decided to finish the study next week since it was almost time to go to the park and we still had quite a bit to cover. We "swung" by and got Cindy and Kaela on the way to the park and then headed there together. It was a really nice time. We had a good group there - Selina, Leisava, Ure, Rema, Maybel, Winnie, Cindy and me. We sang, talked, and ate together. Those ladies sure are precious. After it was over, I took some of them home and dropped some in town.

Friday, August 18th - We found out today that Mike got a new place. We're all so glad. Not that the other one was bad, it was just expensive, too big and they had just raised the rent on him. So...it was time to move on. We can't wait to see it. Cindy and I have been wanting to walk more since the weather has been nice. So, we walked to town for a while (market, post office, and store). It's nice to get out and enjoy God's creation. We had team night - ate steak - and then some of us watched a movie together. It was a relaxing evening.

Saturday, August 19th - I spent the day working around the house and working on some Bible class stuff. I also read for a while this afternoon. It's nice to have a day to do that.

Sunday, August 20th - It was a nice Lord's day. I get frustrated with the inconsistencies sometimes though. Flexon wasn't there (Fiona's gone to Malekula for a couple of weeks) and Patrick and Leisava weren't there either. But, thankfully the others were. Alsen has been really regular lately too. I ended up teaching Seskie and Noel today b/c Maybel wasn't there in time to teach. It's fine with me, but I know Maybel enjoys teaching too. I hate that the buses can't be trusted to get her here on time. Thankfully soon she won't have to depend on buses (b/c she'll be able to walk to the new building). It was a good day of worship and fellowship though.

Monday, August 21st - I spent most of the day working on getting Bible studies organized and prepared. I am wanting to get a few done in advance since Ben and Tara will be here soon

and I don't want to be planning while they are here - I want to have it done beforehand. I also plan to get some planning for Bible class out of the way in the next week or so.

Tuesday, August 22nd - I spent much of the day organizing things around the house - getting the guest room ready, going through all of the "supplies" in the back closet and getting reorganized there. I also swept and cooked/baked.

Wednesday, August 23rd - What an exhausting day for me! It may not sound like much, but here goes...this morning Cindy, Kaela, Eric and I went to see Mike's new house. We thought we might as well take a few loads while we were going, so we did. Mike's new place is great. Well, that wasn't the tiring part (but it factors into why I got so tired out). After leaving Mike's I came home and did a few things around the house (laundry, etc) and waited for a truck so I could go to a Bible study. I left at about 12:30 hoping to get some visiting done on the way to Leikavei's. I stopped by Leisava's to give her the ladies schedule for the month and visited for a while. Then I "ran" by to give Joana a schedule too. Then I headed to Leikavei's. She wasn't there, so I talked to Patrick for a minute, then headed out again. I went out to Rose's (she wasn't there either - I left the schedule with Shem). Finally, I decided to stop by Ure's (I needed to give her something for Akisa - who is leaving tomorrow for Ambae). Well, I got to Ure's and she wasn't there - one of the boys said she went to Noel's mom's house. So, I went to Noel's, but no one was there either. It wasn't my day for finding people at home, so I decided I'd better just go home myself. When I got home I literally felt like I had just run a marathon. I know it doesn't sound like much, but when you are driving on REALLY bumpy roads, having to make three point turns all the time, and have no power steering, it really wears you out! I literally sat on my bed and read for about an hour after I got home b/c I was plum worn out. :o)

Thursday, August 24th - Today was a good day. I went out to the farm to study with Rema, Maybel and Winnie. I always enjoy being with them. We studied for about an hour and then sang some songs. We all really like to sing, so we usually sing a few songs when I go out there. All of the ladies are planning to go out there on Saturday for ladies fellowship, so Rema, Maybel and Winnie are all looking forward to that as well.

When I got home I ate lunch, read a little, worked on my journal and then Cindy and I ran to town to shop a little. When Eric got home, we ate dinner (we were both hungry at 4:30!) and then worked on Bible study prep and various other things for the evening. We have been going to bed really early lately. I don't know what the deal is, but since we got back from the States, we have been going to be early. It probably has something to do with the fact that the guys are working out at the land - physical labor that wears them out. But, I don't know why I'm so tired too. I guess it's "sympathy pains?" Anyway, it's kind of nice going to bed early b/c it makes it easier to wake up early.

Friday, August 25th - We spent the morning/afternoon running errands and shopping. This evening I went and got Joshua and Olivier (Patrick and Leisava's boys) so they could come spend the night with us. We had team dinner - fajitas! The boys loved it and ate really well (Olivier hasn't been eating well and I was a little worried until I saw how good he ate this evening). Olivier is only 4, and it was his first time away from mommy, so...he cried for a few minutes after dinner (I was washing dishes) - but once I came in and held him for a while, he was fine. We watched an animated movie (Joshua, Eric and I did - Olivier was asleep 10 minutes into it). Then we went to bed. It was a good night.

Saturday, August 26th - This morning I heard Olivier moving around before the sun even came up (5:00 or so). Of course I wasn't ready to get up at 5:00, so I just let them play and I slept until almost 6:00 and decided to go ahead and get up. I took a shower and then read to Olivier while Joshua colored in our huge oversized coloring book. Once the stores opened, we went and got some bread for breakfast. After a game of hide-and-seek and Simon Says with Eric, we were ready to go. We took the boys home and then picked up Leisava for the ladies fellowship out at the farm.

We had a great time out at the farm today! Cindy and I were talking and we were saying how glad we are that no matter which ladies are there - whether there's a lot of ladies or just a few, we always have a great time. We laughed until my cheeks hurt today. It was so much fun. Oh, I forgot to mention that when we were backing out of the driveway this morning, I ran over a water pipe (which is just sticking out there and we've all hit it before. Anyway, this time it broke (of course) and started spraying water everywhere. Eric had to go turn the water off. He spent about 4 hours and made three trips to the hardware store in an effort to fix it, but he couldn't get it fixed. He called and they said they couldn't come until Monday (which makes sense since it's Saturday). So, here we are without water for a few days. Such is life! :o) Because of the lack of running water in the house, Eric suggested that we go to town for dinner (he said he didn't want me to have to do dishes without water). It's crazy how much we take it for granted that we have running water in our houses!

Monday, August 28th - Sunday, September 3rd - We just spent a fantastic week in Australia! It was great to be able to just get away, relax, and unwind. It was actually really surprising how much like America it is there. (Of course we spent our time in the city - it's very "urban.") We enjoyed the shopping and eating out and just being in "civilization" for a while. While most Americans go on vacation to get away from those very things, it's amazing how your perspective changes and that's what you want to go on vacation for! Eric and I even went to the movies! to see the new Pirates of the Caribbean movie. Of course it was expensive, but we figure since we're averaging going to the movies about once a year, it's worth it! :o) In addition to all of the things we enjoyed doing in the city, we all really enjoyed going to the Australia Zoo (Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter's zoo). It was such a neat experience. We got to walk right through where the kangaroos were and pet and feed them. We also got to get really close to the koalas and pet them too. We fed an elephant and saw lots of crocodiles and reptiles. We watched a few shows and rode the train (a favorite of Kaela's). It was a really fun day. The guys also went to an Australian Rules football game. It's an exciting game - fast paced. They all really enjoyed it, but Mike most of all (he misses those Broncos games)! We got back Sunday afternoon and rested for a few hours. Eric and I went to study with Patrick and Leisava. We were glad to see them. They said they missed us. When we got home, the six of us (Mike, the Bakers and us) had a time of worship. We left Australia too early to worship with some Christians there and we got back too late to worship with the Christians in Vila. So, we had our own time of worship together. It was a nice time.

Monday, September 4th - Today was a difficult day. We found out that my grandpa (who had been struggling with Alzheimer's for several years and had recently been ill off and on) passed away today. I talked to my sister and mom (it was her father) and we cried together and I tried to send my love and comfort through the phone to them. It's times like this that I miss my family the most. I hate that I can't be there for my mom while she's dealing with losing her father. I hate that I can't be there to comfort and be comforted by my family. My grandpa was one of the nicest, most wonderful men ever to walk the earth. He was an absolute gentleman and so giving of himself, his time, and his love to others. I will miss him.

Tuesday, September 5th - Thursday, September 14th - Our good friends Ben and Tara Bruner arrived this morning. We are so looking forward to a week and a half with them. They are such a wonderful Christian couple and some of our dearest friends. We feel blessed that they were able to come see us. The guys stayed busy with the building project out at the land, some carpentry projects around the house (building a bed frame for Eric and I and a dining table - both of which are absolutely wonderful). Tara and I had a couple of Bible studies and a trip to Etas with the ladies on Saturday. We (Ben, Tara, Eric and me) went to the waterfalls and then to Epau village to spend the night and worship with the Christians there. On Monday morning the four of us got on a plane to Tanna. We spent the first day adjusting. On Tuesday we took a hike - walked up to the volcano (ash plains surrounding it) and then decided to climb up the volcano. It was quite an adventure and very strenuous. Not only did we climb the volcano (which is active, I might add), we did it barefooted, and Tara and I did it with skirts on! It was so fun. We were all tired - Tara and I said our legs were feeling a little like jelly on our walk home, but it was worth it. We got to experience the volcano in a way most tourists never do. Then that night we rode a truck back up to the top of the volcano (on a different, easier road than what we did on the climb up earlier in the day) and got out and watched the fireworks of the volcano at night. It was absolutely spectacular. It was one of the most amazing things I have ever seen in my life!

We were to arrive in Tanna on Monday and fly back to Vila on Wednesday. Air Vanuatu had other plans :o) We got ready to come back to Vila on Wednesday afternoon and they cancelled our flight. But, they paid for an extra night on the island and we enjoyed it. So, we didn't end up getting back until Thursday at about 1:00. Ben and Tara left at 6:00 to go back to the US. We are going to miss them. We had a wonderful time with them. It was hard to see them go. We love them so much.