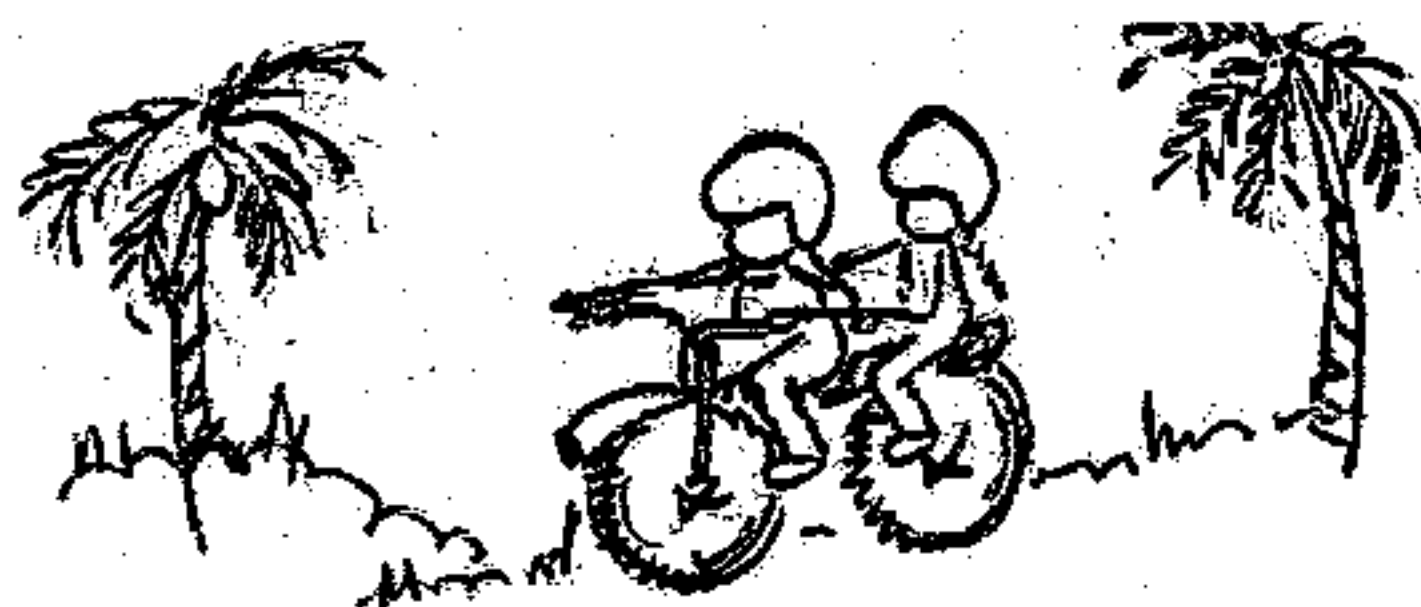


St. Vincent Update



Fall Greetings from the Sunny Caribbean!,

16 Sept.

Its friday afternoon and I'M at my office trying to speed through this newsletter so I don't have to lug this typewriter home through the torrential downpour outside. As the more mundane things go the weather has been suspiciously dry through this 'rainy' season we have been spared, so far, of any hurricane (Alicia passed thru here as a tropical wave) or even tropical storm. The temps have been bearable (around 90) but the humidity is enough to literally curl your hair. But on to more 'exciting' subjects...

We had the happy fortune to get the loan of a motorcycle from a PCV who had to go to Barbados for a few days. We immediately set out for the farthest point on the leeward side of the island, Richmond Beach. It was an exciting and hair-raising ride. The road winds along the coast, up and down steep hills, in and out of towns and villages. It is breathtaking scenery dominated by a multitude of greens with splashes of color. The besparkled azure Caribbean, and the towering cliffs reminds me of the northeast or northwest coasts of the U.S. (in a caribbean kind of way). The countryside, for all its color and beauty, also brings a stark reminder of the poverty here. The wooden lean-to's and tin shacks. The naked children by the roadside. The occasional donkey and its gently prodding 'driver' remind us, once again, that this is a world away from the states. Unfortunately, we had no time to stop and spend time taking all of it in. The tortuously coiled and narrow road demanded all of this novice's attention. The burning question was how, HOW do people who drive cars (and the local 'country' buses) pass each other in opposite directions?? At some points the road is about a cars-width wide. For me, driving a motorcycle for the first time and on the LEFT side of the road, it gave terror a whole new meaning. Alfred Hitchcock could never duplicate the visceral agony that that roadway did. It would make a great Disney ride. But for all the excitement, we were just plain happy to be out sightseeing this amazing island.

Deb's birthday was another high-point (for me, at least). We rode over to the french restaurant to enjoy our first "night on the town" since we arrived last December. After enjoying local appetisers such as fish stew and conch au gratin, we dined on filet with sauce bernaise and lamb chops (unheard of in our kitchen!!). I baked a chocolate cake (from scratch no less!). If this all seems rather unexciting to you, you just have to remember that on occasions like birthdays or holidays, we have an excuse to splurge a little. And a little splurging goes a long way in St. Vincent. Actually, you do feel a bit guilty when there is so much poverty so very close by, but the truth is that we are in a trans-cultural setting which demands compromise. We can never become Vincentian nor can we stop being U.S. citizens. Our splurges are our remembrances of how it used to be. Its important to us to retain some of those bits and pieces of home...I'm wandering off the track...

Whats the latest on my job? Gads, your guess is as good as mine. I've been out sowing seeds of interest among various Ministries and departments and suddenly I've got seedlings everywhere! The most promising seems to be in the Ministry of Trade And Agriculture where there is a possibility that I would become involved in the development and implementation of a Marketing Intelligence unit to help collect, organise and disseminate agricultural info. to farmers and market people. The goal is to provide accurate supply and demand info. so that farmers can make rational choices

about what crops to plant and when. The St. Vincent agricultural market is characterized by gluts and shortages that produce widely varying prices during the year. Even though most crops here can be grown year round. There is a similar system operating in Barbados and it has greatly helped the farmers there. In fact someone from Barbados will be coming over here to help me do an initial assessment and plan, should the project be approved.

Deb is, as usual, very busy at the hospital. She now has two assistants she is training. The new assistant, Cecilia, is a recent nursing graduate and is showing some interest in the job. Deb was initially elated at the enthusiasm shown by Cecilia and that has been moderated somewhat in the past few weeks. But still, it's nice to have someone that is actually interested. Deb is not doing as many home visits as she was, but the workload at the hospital is more than enough to keep her occupied. The new section of the hospital is to be opened soon and though buildings are needed less than adequate nursing care here, the new surroundings may make the patient's stay a little more tolerable. Medical care still has a long way to go here.

Free time activities seem to have increased. We have had a lot of local visitors and guests for dinner. Judith, Debbie's assistant, brought her kids over to stay one night. PCV's have dropped in to swim and stay for dinner. We had three Canadian medical students over to have dinner and talk about their impressions of St. Vincent. In all, our evenings have been quite busy. Weekends, too. But that only makes our time here go faster. And it seems our Christmas visit is just around the corner.

We have much to be thankful for. Many blessings have come our way. It seems things are so much better now than they were in April. Yet, we know that we haven't changed St. Vincent. Rather, St. Vincent has changed us. Slowly we're coming to understand it and its people. Our complacency has been taken from us and we are beginning to feel as though we'll never be really comfortable back in the U.S.A. Not with so much poverty and poor health here (and everywhere in the third world). The needs are many and the resources so few. It challenges us all to do more, wherever we live, to help alleviate the suffering of those less fortunate than us.

Well, that's about it. We are happy. We are healthy. And we are looking forward to seeing as many of you as we can when we return on DECEMBER 14th at 10:33pm (MST) but more on that later!! We love you and miss you!

Yes we do miss you all and hope you're healthy and happy too. The time is passing almost too quickly for me as I feel I have too many things to get done before Christmas.

Whoops, and now Pete is hurrying me out the door so we're not too late for work this morning. Again, we really are looking forward to seeing many of you this Christmas.

May God bless & keep you all.

Love,

Debbie & Pete

