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Getting back to St. Vincent and heading into our last year as PCV's

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21/2/1984

January flew by and I'm still picking up the pieces. The most notable experience was our trip over to Bequia. Deb had contacted a young woman over there who was involved in a handicapped development project with her boyfriend. Before we left for our state-side visit, we had made plans to visit them at the end of January. We actually made a weekend of the whole thing going over on Saturday and returning on Wednesday. It was a good visit. Deb had a chance to contribute by working with the folks (mostly kids) who hadn't had a physio to work with them. She also trained some of the mothers and helpers to do some of the exercises themselves. She felt pretty good about it. I just took it easy and followed along (comes naturally). A lot of interesting possibilities emerged from the visit. There is a Catholic priest there (visiting from Boston) who is interested in doing development work in the Grenadines specifically. He 'proposed' a team of Debbie (physiotherapist), myself business and employment consultant), a social worker and himself to work on the team. It would have to be externally funded and nothing since has been said about it. Joanie and Michael, the couple doing handicap development work, had a similar idea utilizing Deb and I in similar capacities and living on a boat traveling the Grenadines. Both are rather exotic and a long shot job possibilities but I don't expect any 'hard' offers to come out of it. But it's nice to think about it as a possibility.

We're also trying to get a coffee urn donated from one of our back home churches because Joanie wants to get a dockside coffee and donut stand going to generate income for her project. Haven't heard a reply to that proposal yet. We're burdening everybody lately.

The next big event was my transfer to Mktg Corp. Yes, I am finally here and busy! Too busy right now in fact. I've been collecting Market data every week and now I am in the final stages of typing up our monthly report. I'm going to be hard-pressed to get everything done this month. Then, next month (around the end of March) I'll be going to Barbados to work with the BASIS team there to try to work out a strategy for the future of the Unit here. I've already applied for a PCV to replace me (in, alas, December!) so it looks that the unit May indeed be a real entity before I leave. USAID has proposed \$20,000 USD for the unit (I could use it now).

As for the other activities a trip up to fancy, a few dinner parties and a phone call from home but not much mail). The year has started with a Bang!

2/3/1984

The pace is insane. How could it be that one year ago I was languishing in finance. Work has become unbelievable! The unit is progressing nicely. I'm still not doing everything that needs to be done but it is coming along. I hope to add wholesale info this month (if I can catch up) and change the lines of distribution so that the right people get the right information. The chaos stems from having to collect the info myself. I need to be in three places at once and at the same time write reports and distribute them. But it is coming along. The hectic pace may diminish by May.

At the Vincentian homefront I was involved in my first (and only, hopefully) confrontation with a racist and drunk Vincentian. It's a long story but the essentials are that I had found a goat tethered in my yard within chewing range of one of my orange trees. I finally found the guy and asked him if he could tether it away from the trees and he kindly obliged. Unfortunately, some of his drunken friends saw me talk to him and took offense that a white ex-pat would tell of Vincentian what to do on Vincentian soil. So one of them decided to come over and punch me out. He hit me in the chest then went on to tell me how he could bust my head and knock it off and, to tell me he didn't appreciate me telling Vincentians what to do. He went on and on. Oppression, slavery, white imperialism, it was all there. Finally he left. I was scared. I still am. But I filed a police report, just in case he continues to harass me. It's left me a bit jumpy.

To make things worse Liz's rape case was dropped due to lack of evidence (even before it was heard). So I get this sinking feeling that nobody here is looking out for us.

Travel plans? Looks like Barbados at the end of this month. Trinidad in June. And off to Europe August 30th until September 27th.

Whew! I got to keep up with this thing. Otherwise I'm going to exhaust myself squeezing past events onto paper.

6/3/1984

A whole new section and I realize with only 9 months left, I've got a lot of writing to do to fill this journal. funny I still go back mentally and remember those first few entries. So naive, so idealistic. And all the experiences in between. The hurt, the tears the total confusion. Ambiguity says it all. The whole process is always one of becoming. But becoming what is the big question. My views and dislikes of Peace Corps constantly evolve from frustration to figuring it out with lots of fear in between. Toughest job you'll ever love? I doubt it. PC is constantly pushing you beyond the point of where you feel safe. Pushing you into situations you'd rather not deal with. I don't exactly like being pushed all the time and so far. It would be much easier if you could seize control at some point but, no. You always end up in the 'danger zone' and frantically search for a safe spot. I think that's why I'm constantly planning for safety, mostly in terms of returning to the USA. But it hasn't been bad. Bad in the sense that I regret time spent here. There were 'bad' times but I seemed to have grown through them. But mostly, I've been pushed to become more mature and self-reliant. Probably have done the same in the states, just would have taken longer.

I don't write so much of people here either. Mostly me and Deb. Whether that indicates a lack of knowing Vincentians or just emphasizes where the emphasis has always been, I don't know. I wish I were better at writing about the local characters. There are plenty of them. Standouts in an American crowd, but such a part of the local mix that it hardly seems noteworthy. The drunk yardman and ambulance drivers who weave through the hospital grounds. The homeless in town that are constantly camped out on various doorsteps. The beggars who regularly hit you up with a "gimme dollar". The total space outs who wander the streets talking, shouting and singing to imaginary audiences. The blind flute player who has his usual spots to play for change and who, by the way, has invested his 'small change' into several large real estate holdings. These folks and normal Vincentian; children, rostars and businessmen make up that peculiar mix called Vincentian society. How can you possibly put it into words? I wish this could be like "Living Poor" the book by an Ecuadorian PCV that we read prior to joining. His ability to describe that life in detail was hoped to be my model. Instead, it just put me and Deb trying to make sense out of senselessness and bring order out of chaos. When I write the final chapter of this story, probably after reading it in the quiet and cold solitude of our home back in the USA, it will be interesting to see what sense, if any, I make out of the whole thing. Gads, up to this point, I still have unsettled feelings.

Back to 'real time'. No further hassles with my assailant who did, in fact, turn out to be Bob Scott, owner of our beloved Ambassadors club and the singer of "Give me the strong rum". I'm thankful for that, but can't help feel anxious as I approach our home in Edinboro. That event cash shadows everywhere.

The M.I.U. progresses nicely. Still beyond my expectations at this point but A-OK all the same. TONS still to be done and I just need to remain energetic and determined to see it through. I'll be going to B-DOS on March 26th to spend a week with the BASIS crew and get the basics of their units operation. Embassy plane, too! Should be a nice ride. I do worry about leaving Deb for so long

will have to arrange for someone to stay.

I've got travel on the brain. We'll be in Trinidad the weekend of June 24th just before St V's Carnival and arrival of new PCVs (hopefully Deb's replacement too). A good 3 months away but after that, the time will fly by anyway so, for me, it's not too soon to plan. Trip to Europe still on course for August 30th and 2,000 francs are on their way to Martinique to secure our flight on Nouvelle Frontiere. I'll be buying more foreign exchange with dollar falling as it is...

Homefront SLC - Dad has been demoted but may be promoted due to death of one replacement and quit of another. Holly is, amazingly, pregnant and word is everything is A-OK. Deb's brother and sister in law had a girl (Katrina) and we're awaiting news of other newborn from Deb's sister (reads like a population explosion doesn't it?)

I'm okay. Tired lately, bad acne continues to scar my back (it doesn't like tropical heat). Deb's fine too but terribly overworked and almost tearful over spreading herself so thin in a situation that constantly demands more than one person can possibly handle. She's looking forward to July...
ENOUGH!