

Business as Usual

Eventually, even the "foreign" becomes the new routine.

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12/8/83

Back from conference seems long ago already. Brief. Different and my anticipations never found fruit in reality. Oh well. A brief sketch.

Arrangements to leave were biggest hassle. LIAT has the unique ability to make even the simplest task into a nightmarish complexity. Combine them with the enigmatic Peace Corps machinery and you begin to get the picture. First problem was just getting the tickets. Somehow, my ticket was misplaced and after a thorough search, showed up at CITS. How they got it, nobody knew. Then came the discovery that Deb's ticket was made out for St Vincent to St Lucia to St Lucia. Mine had been altered in price from \$164 to \$288. Debs had been supposedly missed priced at \$164. Travel agent said there was nothing he could do, I should go to the airport to LIAT and have it corrected (downtown office is closed Saturday). So I caught a van to the airport where LIAT said it had to be handled by the downtown office. It wouldn't be opened until Tuesday (Monday was a holiday) so I best get there early because our flight left Tuesday morning. Tuesday arrives with a large crowd at the LIAT office but a miraculous one hour later and I have two travel vouchers good for \$576 in travel. We go to the travel agent to work out differences in assumed prices. I get another travel voucher, several tickets and trundle ourselves off to the airport. Whew! Because of some aberration in billing I'm \$248 richer but was it worth it? I don't know.

Conference is like a H.S.I reunion. I even was asked to sign somebody's mug book. Our time was structured around a WID workshop but I was more interested in sharing our experiences. Positives and negatives. I had hoped for no more additional training but no luck. Women in Development (WID) is worthwhile but venue misplaced. We were all much more interested in just talking and catching up.

Although it didn't meet my expectations, it still was a valuable time for me. I had hoped that I would find many people in my same situation. As it was, there were a few that had had similar experiences. That is, being underutilized. In our travels, we also found others in a work vacuum. But not as many as I had thought. Perhaps people were less honest than I. Perhaps they could talk up their assignments though their situation was identical. In any event, most folks seemed busy or at least minimally involved in their assignments. Though a bit demoralizing, it was valuable in that it at least challenged me to try once again (and however futile) to find some meaningful work here. Is that possible? I don't know.

Friday we flew to Dominica. However, our suitcase stayed in St Lucia and was later flown to Antigua. We spent some time around Rosseau, waiting for a bus to Portsmouth and taking care of odds and ends. Portsmouth was an okay experience. Much like Georgetown or Barroullie was a poor, country town at the northern end of Dominica. We dined on "Mountain chicken" (known locally as crappaud [frogs legs]) and walked out to see if we could catch a ride to the Geest Boat to meet some friends of Julie and Orlando (who we were staying with). No luck. We returned to the house, talked and drank and had an uncomfortable night's sleep on the floor there.

Needing to catch the bus at 6:00 a.m., we arose at 5:30. Deb had a terrible headache and wasn't feeling too well so we caught the bus, collected our bag at the airport (better late than never) and got off at Norm and Rosa Cupfender's house (though Norm and Rosa were stateside, they offered their place for us to stay). What we found was a barn-like, beat up structure with a few pieces of furniture and two lounge chairs that were to be our beds. Mosquitoes everywhere. Deb and I caught a shower, hung out some clothes and were given a tour of the place (an old estate) by the owner. He was a keeper of parrots, boas, pigeon, guinea pigs and odds and ends other creatures of nature. Quite an eccentric but interesting man.



We caught a van into Rosseau, Deb's fever climbing. Unable to contact other EC-33s, we had breakfast, toured the market and were directed to a house where a couple of EC-34s were staying. That turned out to be a godsend. Deb's temp was 103.5 and I wasn't feeling all that great myself. It gave us a chance to relax (Deb to sleep) and unwind after such a busy couple of days. Bob and Kevin were wonderful hosts. Bob spun yarns about his days in Samoa and gave us some useful insights into PC life elsewhere. I was glad I hadn't gone to Samoa. Actually we ended up staying there for the next two nights. Deb's illness was serious enough to prevent us from going to Martinique on Sunday. I did some hiking with a couple of EC-33s (Dick and Margaret Graham and Trish Heady) to a place called T-2 gorge. It was a wonderful place. I was sorry Deb had missed it but I took as many slides as I could.



Monday we flew out. Back through Martinique and St Lucia. LIAT sent our luggage along this time (bless them) and we headed straight for Dr Baynes when we returned to St Vincent. Deb is still recouping and I've been challenged into rethinking my job. But it is, most peculiarly nice to be home.

22/8/83

Deb is fully recouped and is busily back at work. I too have been busy. What was so recently a slow work load rapidly expanded into a busy schedule. I've got more than enough to do and it should persist well into September. I talked with Van last Monday about my assignment and it's rather relaxed and slow paced nature. Seems as though my complaints were a bit premature because we got some basics established and set some objectives about future efforts to make my job more productive and, perhaps, more useful to the public service. That may be overly optimistic but there were a few key problems that needed resolving before the job could operate more officially. Biggest problem is lack of a counterpart. My attachment to Mr Gaynes was an administrative necessity but not much help in getting the contacts and information I needed to pull this thing together. The logical choice would be an attachment to the Services Commission (personnel). I have been working mostly with Gillian John and an official attachment to her might smooth some of the problems related to protocol and collaboration on training and related matters. The second problem was how and where I could go outside the public service to provide consultative help to those who might utilize me in the private sector. Mr Keene assured me that private consultation in the private sector was within P.C. purview so we might circulate a letter to private companies offering my skills. I'm also going to rewrite my job description and goals in terms of broader objectives. The job description project is not going to plan and I don't see it as my job to promote the exercise. I will assist but I won't be writing all the job descriptions as I originally and optimistically had intended. I don't see that as my role here.

And, to add to that just talked to Van again (on the steps of my office on returning from lunch) and things are even more up in the air. Apparently, Mr Keene talked to both the Prime Minister and the minister of the PM's office and they think I should be attached to Labour Dept. No problem, as long as I do not have to give up turf already gained in the "waiting game" played the last 8 months. I still want to be intimately involved in the development of an in-house training program. I still want to be available to work on personnel matters i.e. job descriptions and performance eval, etc. Taking on job creation and allocation matters in Labour is fine as long as I don't become a "body" to do things no one else is willing or able to do. Gads I need a counterpart and Jill was a good one. She needs more experience and support in her training efforts here. I am a training professional and should remain near to that discipline. Career-wise I will benefit more if I remain in that capacity. It will be interesting to see what actually will become my job. I am a bit worried about it.

31/8/83

A double ear infection has kept me off the phone for the training and employment survey in the hotel sector so I've been somewhat busy preparing job descriptions for the nurses at the hospital. What amazed me was the lack of patient orientation in the description of nursing duties. It wasn't until I did the job description for the nursing assistant, the lowest rung on the totem pole, that patient care finally entered the picture. The rest of the hierarchy was involved in administrative duties. No wonder that so few nurses are involved in patient care, it's not part of their job description? I'm still amazed. So I tried to rewrite patient care into the descriptions. Even my brief encounter with nursing service was enough to make me an expert in nursing duties. As a nursing student, I knew more and did more nursing care than I staff nurses does here. It's a wonder the medical staff doesn't collapse with the kind of nursing support services offered here.

I still need to get back to my employment and training survey. Perhaps tomorrow, ears willing. I feeling that same old reluctance to get out and do something. It's so persistent that I wonder what it is that is causing it. Again I begin to wonder if I'm not meant to do something else. Something besides desk work or at least a field that interests me. I doubt I could handle government work. Too much bureaucracy and foot dragging. Just now I'm more oriented toward field work and being out of doors. I like construction. I liked nursing I enjoyed being an auto mechanic and station manager. I wonder what they all have in common that appeals to me so much. I also need, and have tried to, offer those skills up to God. For him to do what he will with them. But it seems lame and insincere. Mostly because I tend to add a lot of "ifs" "ands" or "buts" to it. My faith has been shaky at best. I often know what needs to be done but I often lack the courage or motivation to carry it out. I fail miserably every time. It seems to me that doing God's will, will bring a joy that surpasses merely liking a job. That doing the job becomes a motivation for doing it more. Even Paul, when beaten and imprisoned, reveled in the fact that he was doing God's work. That's dedication and love and faith. even though the physical pains and weaknesses brought him down, God brought him up and sustained him. I sit here immobilized for fear or whatever, yet if I was convinced of my role as one of God's children, nothing, short of death, would hinder my carrying out of my vocation. I'm suffering a lack of faith and feel entrapped by it. I need the faith I lack even to break the circle. I feel I'm wasting my time here (I was about to add "and God's time too" but he is time. outside of Him there is no time and truly within him there is no time). Lord I offer myself to you for you to do with me what you will. Make me an instrument of your love. Make me sing your joy. Help me to build your kingdom. I that I have is yours. Amen.

12/9/83

I'm slipping and I've noticed that my journaling has fallen by the wayside. I do hope it doesn't stop totally. Though that appears to be the direction it's heading. Well, to update a bit.

My work phobia was circumvented by me mailing out the questionnaire. I figured that it would be less threatening to mail out the form, have the hotel managers fill it out, and then I'll follow up. No doubt I'll get a poor response rate and have to call most of them anyway, but at least I tried and at least they will know who I am when I call. It wasn't meeting the problem head on but at least it lessens my anxiety somewhat.

Deb's birthday has passed and it seems not so long ago that we were all gathered at Garfield for a celebratory dinner. One of the last big bashes at our old home. Seems so long ago and so ideal in comparison to the current situation. Even then our entry into the PC was anxiously approaching (oh how little we knew then!!). But beyond the memory was the nice reality of Deb's first birthday outside the U.S. I really tried to do it up big. I baked a chocolate cake (from scratch no less) and took Deb out for a very tasty (but expensive) dinner at the French restaurant. We had Keith's bike (as he was in Barbados) so the transport hassle was minimal. I bought her a Batik print wrap around skirt plus some needed kitchen glassware which was just waiting for a "special occasion" to be bought. Mom sent a very nice cotton dress for Deb and all in all we had a fairly festive birthday celebration.

Having Keith's bike was also a nice bonus last week. we immediately took it all the way up to Richmond Beach which is about the furthest point north on the leeward side which is accessible to vehicles. What beautiful country it is! Though I was a bit rusty with my motorcycle riding, we took it easy, stopping in Troumaca to visit with Dennis for an hour or so to rest our weary and sore bottoms. By the time we finished the ride (some 5 hours!) we were very happy to stop. The bike gave us a needed change in our routine. A little excitement and a change of pace. The PC policy of prohibiting bike ownership except for job related reasons is really a shame. Deb and I have been here 9 months and saw more of the island in one day, than we had in 9 months. I've also noticed that I must be becoming used to the level of level of poverty here in St V. The housing and living conditions that we saw, though substandard, were not as heart-wrenching as they seem to be to me when I was up that way last Jan. Likewise for a subsequent Jeep trip to Fancy with Oro last Thursday. I don't think it's a case of overload, but rather finally beginning to fit all the pieces together into a sensible whole. I'm seeing things through a Vincentian's eyes. It's like I've known it all my life. That doesn't mean that I no longer care or that I don't think that things should be improved. Rather it's an adaptation or acculturation to the lifestyle. For example, if I found bugs in flour in the states, I probably throw out the flour. Here though, I'd sift out the bugs and throw them out. It's not that I've lowered my standards per se. I've just become more pragmatic when dealing with the realities here. Like my vision and my horror of all the mosquitoes that swarm about our house. Originally, I wanted to screen the place. The more practical method is to expose as little skin as possible while still remaining comfortable and use mosquito coils to control the rest. I do

believe I'm getting used to living here. I certainly should be by now.



Job wise things have gone berserk. Earlier through the efforts of Van it looked as though I'd end up at the labour department. Well things have changed again and through a convoluted series of events I may end up in agriculture.

Way back in July, I spoke to Elizabeth (EC-31) about a possible position with agriculture coordinating marketing information. Such a position would call upon my skills and stats and econ plus give me a more hands on job collecting and disseminating marketing data. She had been asked by AG and Marketing Corp to start up such a project but since she only has a few months left, was reluctant to start it up. So she fielded it to me. I was ambivalent at the time and really unsure about such a change of direction. Fact is, this Manpower Development position who yield me greater professional benefits than say working in Agriculture. But, I said I would think about it. While in St Lucia I spoke to Cynthia from Barbados about the possibility of working on a marketing info project here just like she does in B-Dos. Well she talks to her boss and he writes to the Ministry of Agriculture and says he would be more than happy to send over an assistant to start up the project and assist Mr Helgren. Well, the minister had never even heard about me so we got on the phone to Elizabeth. The bottom line is that they do want me to start this thing up so I've been trying to talk to Mr Bonadie to figure out the particulars of the job. We'll have to see what happens but I think I'll take the position with a couple of "ifs". If I can finish what I'm doing here in Finance and if I can evaluate the project at the end of three months to see if I want to continue and if I can continue to freelance in training and manpower related activities. Nothing definite. Another promise looms on the horizon.

19/9/83

For the instant, job concerns are on the back burner. I hope to get a letter out this week to Mr Bonadie and Mr Keene to help clarify the political and organizational realities of my job change. I've been dragging my heels a bit. Only because I haven't clearly organized my thoughts about the whole thing. But, it will gel and I will get on with it soon.

Today we received our initial itinerary for our trip home. Wow! It's a reality now. We're booked through to SLC on the 14th and the only things to hammer out are some of the 'too close' flight connections and a determination whether or not we want to go a bargain rate of \$689 but keep our trip to just 21 days or to take five more days and fly back to St V on January 8th at a cost of \$1,100. Practicality says to save the \$400 per person (US!) and keep it to 21 days but that means fewer days in Meridian for Deb (7) versus 11 days. She'll have to make up her mind about that but will probably take the practical route. So at least it's all real now and we just need to make some final adjustments and see what the travel agent in Chicago can come up with. By October's end things should be on a firm footing. travel-wise and job-wise (I should hope!)

Busy weekend too. We had two unexpected overnight guests on Saturday night. Judith, Debbie's assistant got hold of us through neighbors phone to ask if we could put up Shawn and Thekla because she would be out all night(?) Deb said yes and initially I was very uncomfortable with the whole thing but, as it was, it wasn't nearly so bad. Shawn and Thekla were very well behaved (if recalcitrant in going to bed) and we managed to get them up and organized in time for church Sunday morning. After church, Jose, one of Deb's pediatric patients who has become a constant sidekick, came over and we went over to Autley Hall to swim and pick guavas. My second attempt at making them into jelly failed so I've got two quarts of guava syrup to try to thicken into jelly by using some pectin or alum (if I can find it). Jose is a good kid. His dialect still stymies communication at times but he helps me to understand what being a kid in St Vincent is all about. Perhaps he'll help educate the other neighborhood kids about "those white people". I noticed a surprising thing though, even though there is fruit rotting off the trees a short distance from Edinburgh and indeed within it, our trees are regularly stripped. Amazing! I thought it was just because we had the only available trees but not so. We must have just a convenient location.

Back to travel. The fact that will only need \$3,750 EC to fly to the US frees up some of our funds. Maybe we can go to the '74 class reunion next August 11th. I just received notice of it last week so we'll have plenty of time to plan. I'd love to go but it will certainly be an optional thing. Not as pressing or needful as his trip to SLC over X-mas. "Visions of sugar plum fairies dancing in our heads"...

26/9/83

The beginning of the last week of Sept. How far we have come (and it seems 11 weeks is too long to go...) Holly was married last night. Thousands of miles away. How I wished I could have been there! She was on our minds all day. Often in our prayers. Again I find myself cursing long distances and slow mail. Today Jeff and Holly Scheid will be flying to Cancun. I hope they are as richly blessed in their wedding as Deb and I have been in ours. Long distance love to them.

A fast week and weekend. On the job front things are static right now. I'm waiting to hear from Ministry of T&A, get some addresses & letters off to various & sundry people. But for the meantime it's, play the waiting game. My hotel survey return was abysmal, so I'll end up calling most of the people anyway. To my knowledge I've only received one completed form. Back to square one on that project. The most important going on was with Liz's rape hearing. Wednesday, it was postponed when Kelly didn't show, defaulted on his bail and was subsequently arrested (about 10 minutes later when he showed up). The hearing was rescheduled for Friday.

The hearing on Friday was a mixed bag. Dr Baynes testified that Elizabeth had come in and told her that she had been raped. An examination showed internal indications of forcible intercourse, prolonged intercourse or perhaps use of contraceptive foams, douches or devices. Then Liz walked through her long and painful story. It was made even longer by the magistrate having to copy down the testimony himself, long hand. It was a very uncomfortable experience. The cross exam was a joke. The defense lawyer was a jerk and kept insinuating that Liz was lying, making it up and damaging poor Kelly's reputation (as what, I don't know). He even asked that she apologize to him and the court for bringing such a suit to court. Dumb. The magistrate, I felt, was on Liz's side and tried to caution her and keep her from saying anything incriminating. The really amazing thing was that Kelly's defense is that he and Liz drove to the beach. Liz went for a swim at midnight, with no light, at Argyle Beach which has killed people when it was broad daylight and nothing else happened. Oh he does admit having sex with Liz on numerous other previous occasions but not that night. Gads, I can't believe that guy. I had reservations about Liz's story before, but given Kelly's defense, I can't help but believe Liz. The magistrate did too. It goes to a full trial on October 4th. I'll be there.

What followed was a fast weekend. It rained endlessly on Saturday but Deb and I ran into town anyway. We spent the rest of the day doing inside things. Baking, writing and Deb working on a banner for father Renniston Howell's ordination next Sunday. Saturday night we went to mass and stayed after to see the "Witness" again which we had seen way back in April. Sunday I spent washing and grubbing around the garden. Planted broccoli, sweet basil, chives and rosemary along with some cantaloupe. We'll see. Deb spent her day working on the banner and we spent a quiet evening in Bible study (which we really need to do more often). So it's back to work and wondering what will lie in the future.



9/30/83

End of the week. Not a real fulfilling one. I kept hoping that the return on our questionnaire for the employment & training survey would be of such magnitude that there would only be a small number of phone calls to make. Not so. As to date, only one of 25 or so questionnaires has been returned. Which means that I have many many phone calls to make. I've procrastinated all week which is ultimately a major mistake as Mr Scott has been out of the office and the phone relatively unused. As it is, I'll have to make calls amid his return, adding greater anxiety to an already difficult and anxious situation. Gads, I'm so stupid for being so frightened. I really hate this job!

Thoughts too about so many departures. Souman Ghosh left a few weeks back from CPU. Jim leaves next week along with other folks from our "morning coffee club". Just as I was beginning to feel comfortable around so many other ex-pats; sharing the frustration and fears the silliness of some of the public service bickerings. It seems we just settle in, to be disrupted again. I envy their departure. Though I know our farewells will come all too soon (or perhaps not soon enough) I can't help but want to go, too. Dennis, the French agronomist, leaves around the end of October. The ec-31s leave the beginning of December. Leaving, leaving. It's nice to know that we'll be at least get a bit of a breather in the states for a few weeks in Dec. & Jan. Perhaps by then, things on my end will firm up but that may be too much to ask. I may float all the way until next December for all I know. Surely, I will (or have) learned to deal with ambiguity.

As for comings... EC-35's should arrive sometime this fall. EC-36s will be part of a summer program, as PC Wash. is changing the arrival times of health & education people. They will probably arrive sometime next July. Deb's replacement will come 5 months early (if there is one) so that long overlap may allow us for an early COS depending upon circumstances. We could probably depart sometime in early November if we wished. I wish! But it certainly too soon for anything but speculation on that account. My energy is concentrated now on #1 Getting this blasted training and employment survey finished. #2 Setting this marketing intelligence project in motion. #3 Clarifying my role as Manpower development advisor. #4 Surviving until Christmas.

That last item is the kicker in that we heard on VOA (Voice of America) that Eastern Airlines is in financial difficulties so they may file a Chapter 11 and go the way of Braniff and Delta. Great!? Just when the thing was all set and a very cheap price arrived at. Still haven't heard from Sharon Miller in B-ton about alternative airlines and schedules. Trying to work something else out. We may however end up with more travel time in the U.S. So another airline may work out well.

Well, on to the weekend. I'm going to try to make some calls this afternoon but I really don't feel up to it. But then, I'll never really feel up to it so I might as well jump in with both feet!

4/10/83

Tuesday morning and I'm a vegetable. We had Jim Rutherford over for a "farewell" dinner last night. That guy is a riot. Witty, intelligent yet sensitive. I guess we are always attracted to people we think are like us. I like him. wish Deb & I had met him sooner. We hope to visit him (if/when) we go to England. the more people we meet here, the more we want to visit them in Europe should we go. And greater's the reason for going. The really amazing thing is that we could be COS'ing in a little more than a year if we went early. That becomes a new carrot at the end of the stick. It would also be nice to travel to Europe in the fall. But, of course, of course, it's much too early to even guess what next fall will be like (but it's always nice... to dream).

Job situation is slowly becoming more convoluted and ambiguous rather than more clearly defined. But that's often what happens here. You get just the opposite of what you expected. My talk with Liz & Jethro raised more questions than it answered. Now it seems Jethro thinks I should be with the Marketing Corp rather than Trade and Ag. I see his point but what I need is action not indecision. I'm still not sure what he wants. He's looking more to demand-side information generation and hoping that supply can be developed on a selective basis. I agree. But the mechanisms for pulling all this together is where the problems arise. I guess I will have a counterpart, who needs training, but my question is why and in what manner? Why isn't he contacting external market info suppliers already? A phone, a typewriter and some addresses & phone numbers is about all you need to start. ORD or Ministry of T&A would develop the contacts and contracts with local reliable farmers and the job is done. Slowly more extensive local Market info could be generated and linked up to the farmers so that gluts and shortages on the local market could be evened out. But that would take time and could be long-term. In the short run, marketing links could be generated by phone calls and letters. Why that hasn't been done as yet, I don't know.

5/10/83

Something I haven't mentioned but has been growing on me over the past few months is that I'm not alone in my frustration here. With Jim leaving tomorrow (darn it) and having to assess his two years of work in Planning, I realized that the problems and frustrations differed between us only in intensity. But given the fact that his services were specifically requested, and mine were optional, those differences were not so great. The ambiguity, the indifference, the underutilization they were as much apart of his experience as they are of mine. His time here, although not wasted in the purest sense, still lacked a concreteness that we all (as expats in the public service) experience. Paul, who works with him and will be here until April, has similar feelings. Paul has a one-year contract and he was saying "If the last 6 months are like the first 6 months, I won't be staying". He has worked in Guyana for 2 years so the cultural aspects of living in the third world are nothing new to him. Yet, he finds himself useless here. Waiting for something to happen. I think it takes a rare, highly motivated person, to get into a situation here and be "successful". Those people, found among PCs, VSOs and other expats are few and far between and cause more anxiety rather than inspiration. Mostly because they trigger a round of "Why not me?" or "What's wrong with me?" questions. Going even further, Vincentions, especially young and well educated Vincentions, also feel unutilized and helpless to change things here. I recently got company here in my office. Randy Cato, M.S. in Pol. Sci. has been placed here as Asst. Secretary. When asked what he'll be doing in the Min of Finance he replied "Well, I haven't been assigned to anything yet. I'm just waiting for something to come about". It will be interesting to see if he actually does something or if he will merely spend his time reading Newsweek and Time as he does now. The incredible waste of Human Resources is at least appalling and gives one some sense as to why St Vincent continues to languish in the third world.

10/10/83

Monday morning and I'm "veg'ed" out. we had a busy but surprisingly relaxing weekend in Troumaca. The reason I'm so tired is that we caught a 6:00 a.m. "bus" down this morning which meant getting up at an unbelievable 5:00 a.m. Plus we got to bed late. I feel like sleeping for a month.

We were fortunate enough to get a ride up on Friday afternoon with Dennis and John-Luc. Roger also came up with us. Saturday, we climbed Soufriere in THE most miserable weather. Rain and wind. Our attempts to talk the other members of the group into postponing the climb until Sunday (surely the weather could be no worse than it was) was unsuccessful so we plodded on up to the top. The first 5 minutes were fine. We could see most of the crater and the huge lava dome in the center. It was raining lightly so I procrastinated in taking pictures. That was a big mistake! It began to rain, HARD. Soaking us through and chilling us to the bone. After 10 minutes or so it let up, long enough for me to snap several pictures before it REALLY began to rain. Finally, we gave up on our plans to climb down into the crater and instead, we beat a hasty retreat down the mountain. The wind was blowing at least 50 mph and the huge, horizontal raindrops pummeled us like shot. The trail turned into a tortuously winding stream (a canoe would have been handy) as we slipped and slid down the mountainside absolutely soaked. Of course it stopped raining as we reached the bottom. The only advantage, if it could be called that, was that we were so chilled and wet that the shower, dry clothes, hot coffee and fatigue reminded me of the comfort one feels after a long day on the ski slope. A reminder which will soon find reality, I hope.



Sunday was much more low-key. Mostly hanging around the house and swimming. Late in the afternoon, Dennis, Rodger and I went up past Spring Village and hiked up to the catchment, collecting seeds along the way. Deb stayed back at Dennis's house and spent the afternoon entertaining the Canadian Med students who had climbed Soufriere that morning on a predictably beautiful day (Ian and Mark). That evening we were to celebrate Dennis's birthday and a whole group of French speaking folks who happened to be here from Dominica , including Dennis's counterpart, showed up. Conversationally we were left out but I was so tired I didn't care. But it did reinforce my interest in learning another language. Americans are so ignorant and insolent in their lack of expertise in speaking foreign languages. I wish I had taken my lessons in French and Spanish more seriously. Actually, I would like to learn enough German and French to be functionally conversational. My Spanish need some building up too. Deb and I want to go to England and Europe next year and I know will wish that we were fluent in something other than English.

So now it's back in Kingstown with this blasted hotel survey nagging at me. I'm such a joke and I have to get on with it (been saying that for 6 weeks now). God grant me strength to do what I must do. Amen!

17/10/83

God did bless me the rest of the week (as I had prayed He would). I plunged in and contacted almost all the hotels (or at least those I could get through to). So the survey has once again gained some momentum and it looks as though it will be completed sometime soon. I'm using the phone of Richard and Paul in the CPU so most of the anxiety has been relieved.

Talked to the helgren clan in SLC and got all the latest info on the weddings and other odds and ends. They all appear well and the excitement is growing (on both sides I might add) about our return in December. It looks as though I overestimated the hassles of our trip up to Meridian before Christmas would cause. Mom said it was okay with her if we only spent one day in Salt Lake and then departed for Meridian for a week. We will be in Salt Lake for Christmas and New Years and will be spending the bulk of time in Salt Lake so it appears that that "uncomfortable" situation will be tolerable. I checked with Eastern's requirements on the 21 day travel situation and the requirement is two for hour layovers so since we can lay over 5 hours in Miami on the way out we won't have to overnight there on the way back. We'll only have to stay in Barbados on the 4th. Whew!

The weekend, as always, was a busy one doing wash, baking and puttering around the garden. Rodger came by late in the afternoon and stayed over for dinner so the evening went by quickly. Typical weekend. Hope the next 8 weeks fly by!

Today has been busy too but not much accomplished. I have an infected cyst in my left ear lobe which needs to be drained. As it requires some surgery, I double checked with Dorothea Hackett in Barbados to make sure the bases will be covered. I'm not real keen on having any surgical procedure done here, including minor stuff, but Dorothea said it was okay as long as it was properly documented. I'll have to visit with the surgeon this afternoon. I hope I have an ear remaining afterwards.

Nothing heard so far on Marketing Intelligence proposal. I got my doubts about the whole thing actually working out. Lots of politics and other hogwash. Frankly, I'm tired of the whole public service and have little confidence left in those in charge. Still, it will be interesting to see what will happen.

20/10/83

The situation with my job is deteriorating further. Fact is that on November 1st I'll be transferred to labour. After much running around trying to gather information, I've come to believe that the change is being done for change's sake. Mr Gaines at MCW didn't know what was going on. Jeff Venner, labour commissioner, didn't seem to have any concrete ideas of what he would do with me if I did move to labour. Mr Marshall seems to think that the move is in my best interest even though he can't identify why or what those reasons are. Seems that the whole impetus for this change came down from the Prime Minister who had spoken to Mr Keene. Mr Keene had mentioned my underutilization to the PM. The PM spoke with Cabinet Secretary Branch who in turn put pressure on the Financial Secretary, Mr Scott. Scott put the bite on Marshall who thought it best to relieve the pressure by getting me out of finance and into labour which was the PM's original idea. Of course it's logical and I would be effective in labour if and only if I'm truly wanted there. And since the change is being implemented along political rather than organizational need lines, I have a feeling that Jeff will resent me being dumped on labour.

To add to that Jethro isn't exactly speeding along with the marketing intelligence project. He seems more full of talk than action and is moving only slowly. I get the feeling of being used and I'm not sure that I like that. I'm not sure what his objectives are so I tend to view him with distrust. I still don't know what he has up his sleeve.

Locally, things are also unsettled. Grenada had a military coup the past few days with Maurice Bishop and several cabinet members being shot. Now the place is under a 24-hour curfew violators threatened to be shot. Greg and Joan Klebe are down there (we think) so all of the PCVs here are concerned about their safety. We still don't know what is going on down there. Perhaps we never will.

We are tentatively planning to go to Troumaca again this weekend. Will probably rent a car and split costs with other PCVs (about 15EC each). this is a surprise party for Dennis who leaves on the 29th.

31/10/83

One year plus has passed since the first entry in the journal. Hooray? THE milestone. I had hoped to mark the day (25th Oct.) with a nice, long journal entry but no luck as it turned out the U.S. invaded Grenada (which did not please me at all) the same day as our anniversary of entering the Peace Corps machine. So last week was a loss to me as local events surpassed personal milestones. I have been unsettled the past week for several reasons. First of all, the Grenada thing just threw me off balance. I didn't agree with the U.S. policy or action and spent the rest of the week trying to formulate a personal stand on the issue (which is not in line with local support). Plus this transfer to labour has been hanging like a Sword of Damocles over my head. I'm not real pleased at the rationale nor the process under which the proposed transfer is taking place. Add to that a sudden burst of activity in getting this marketing intelligence position off the ground and you get an idea of what is going on in my head. Lots of mental activity with very little concrete change taking place. Plus I'm having surgery done on my other ear this morning so things are rather discombobulated just now. More later.

1/11/83

Surgery's done and I'm trying to get organized. To back up a bit.... we celebrated our one year away from home anniversary with Fritos, french onion dip and Tab. I've been planning that experience for months. It seems very strange that we have been here a year. Sometimes it feels like St Vincent is the only home we've had. It's hard to believe that it's so different from the United States. The year that has passed has made it hard for me to imagine what U.S. life is like. I guess we're settled in more than I had imagined. The difficult transition is now a vague memory. The discomforts and difficulties are still there but we're so used to dealing with them that they just seem another aspect of living. Now my interest swings to wondering what the life we have left behind in the U.S. is like. We've learned one heck of a lot in the past year. Mostly we've gained a sensitivity to people that I don't think we had in the states. The daily confrontation of cultures that we experience makes us aware of how different we are from Vincentions but it also has made us aware of how Vincentions are different from us. We tend to seek the roots of these differences and wonder how we can find unity. It will be a shock to be anonymous in the states again. But I think our sensitivity to those around us will remain.

To change tracks. Our weekend in Troumaca was a real mind-blower. All my arrangements to get a van went up in smoke when we arrived to pick it up on Saturday. The guy had promised it to someone else! I couldn't believe it! He had gotten a 3-day rental on it. So we got "bumped". And they call me a capitalist! Well anyway all our efforts to find transport failed and we ended up stuffing seven people into a Toyota Corolla. It got us to Troumaca and back. While we were up there we "played ambulance" and transported an injured Rasta (bike-truck accident, he was lucky). The party was great the food excellent and I was glad to give Dennis a warm send-off.



Amazingly we have just 6 weeks until we visit the West for Christmas. Time has moved fast (thanks be to God) and although our plane reservations are still fuzzy I'm hopeful we can work out all the minor details. Deb and I are trying to put together the Christmas card and collect up our presents. And, if I can weather the insanity over my job situation it looks as if we will have a Merry Christmas.

8/11/83

Travel on my mind. This time to Barbados. Some quick talk and pressure got me into the BAS sponsored workshop on marketing. Well, I think it got me in, I'm still not 100% certain but I could leave as early as Thursday and stay until Saturday morning. The uncertainty is in whether or not Marketing Corp will accept our MIU proposal. A lot is riding on that. Not only the trip but also the fact that my future could be more or less determined by the meeting. If the MIU is established I could be moving over in just a few weeks (or early January, most likely). If not it's back to square one job-wise and I'll be trying to generate more work for myself here in finance. Possibilities exist everywhere but my follow-through hasn't been as complete as it should be. I've become more assertive and will use that to my advantage but the going will be rough if I stay here. The system needs some shaking up. I'm not sure if I could cause the tremor, let alone an earthquake.

Mail has been spotty from the states. Mom is again asking me to come home to stay. Partly I think because of the publicized instability of the region because of Grenada. and partly because I've been bemoaning my underutilization and ambiguous job situation more than I usually do. Fact is, this place does get to you from time to time (not just St V but the public service in general). I would be happier stateside I think but I feel I'm just now getting my feet wet. I'm just beginning to know my strengths and weaknesses and how to deal with them. Strangely, after 1 year of sitting, I'm now ready to dig in and stake a claim in this place. Strange, because I envisioned the time factor as against me rather than for me. That, as time went on I would be less and less able to deal with the situation. Early on it was "If this isn't better by Christmas I'll E.T". Now it's more like "I needed time to adjust and, now that I have adjusted, I'm ready to go for it". I think my expectations were much too high at the outset and that I didn't fully understand the situation or my reaction to it. Now, I'm a bit more realistic as to what I can expect to accomplish and though I feel I could be more tenacious, I don't think it a personal failure totally when I don't follow through. My phone phobias and problems with "getting on with it" were real adjustment problems and though I still need to be diligent in watching my motivation level, I don't need to be quite so unraveled when I do "freeze". I've got to be easier on myself while still pushing. But living in this paradox is what PC living is.

So I remain in ambiguity while still trying to make a contribution. It will be most interesting to see what the next year will bring. Nearly 13 months in the EC has taught me much, but, as in all learning, I need to learn how to learn. This is just another difficult living situation where I have to re-learn the rules. That's what has been difficult and exciting about being here. But then, talk is cheap when holidays are just 5 weeks away.