

Home for the holidays

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11/17/83

And cheaper still when it's only 4 weeks away! Things have gone extremely well in the past weeks. The wonderings are over and the situation is more concrete than they have ever been. As it turns out, the Marketing Board approved the M.I.U. last week and I did go to Barbados for a few days to attend the marketing seminar. It was worth the hassles and now I'm ready to jump in with both feet. There are still mountains to climb. We still need to get the unit set up and operating. I still need to be transferred to the Marketing Corp. We have to find the money to purchase stationery and other odds and ends but essentially the machinery is in place. I talked to Mr Griffin and Cynthia (PCV) from BASIS in Barbados and one or the other should be arriving soon to help set up the unit. I've written all the correspondence and once the budget is made up, all that stuff goes to Jethro to handle. We're on our way but to where, I don't know.

Travel arrangements took a turn to frustration while in Barbados. I double checked itinerary and price. We are confirmed and also return will take us to Barbados on Jan. 4th from SLC. It's the payment that is the hassle. CITS won't accept payment because it wasn't booked through them and won't show up on their computer. So they needed an up-to-date itinerary from LIAT. LIAT said I could pay but the itinerary is wrong and the price was too high (\$699 versus \$549 which is correct, I asked Eastern). So I finally decided to call WESTAM and tell them my troubles and then call home so that they could pay for the tickets and have them waiting in Barbados when we arrive. The positive note is that I got approval for the foreign exchange(\$1,200 US) and will cable up the money this morning and send another cable to Mom and Dad to verify. Another positive thing is that both Debbie's and my leaves have been approved. So the formalities are done. I just hope the tickets are waiting for us in Barbados.

Outside of all the hustle and bustle, things are going well. The dogs next door are barking their brains out probably to remind us of our "fun" time in Jamaica that we were experiencing last year about this time. We need to talk to Maxine about our canine insomnia.

The letters still roll in slowly due to Grenada hassle. But things have finally settled down and it looks as though things are looking up.

21/11/83

Still counting down and I'm feeling impatient to go. Just 22 days now but it seems forever. We need to get organized on Christmas gifts and odds and ends. Job wise my footwork is done now I just have to wait. Wait for the transfer to go through. Wait for the office to be set up over at Marketing Corporation. I really doubt if much can be accomplished in such a short time. The wheels always turn slowly and I'm just going to kick back and relax, now that I've been so busy over the past few months in setting up the M.I.U.. The only thing on the docket is that the US Dept of Agriculture is coming in to do a pre-feasibility cost study on doing the crop census in St Vincent. I will be involved in that in one way or another.

This week has a couple of high points to to it. First, my birthday Wednesday will be a nice opportunity to get out of the house for a while and have a meal at either the Chinese restaurant or the French restaurant. I may take the day off just to catch some rays and read. A quiet time for me. This weekend is our Thanksgiving party at Dibba's and if the weather is good, it should be a nice time. Two 25 lb turkeys and a host of other various side dishes. Sunday will be talking to Mom and Dad (and Gram and Gramps we hope) and I can at least verify flight itinerary and ascertain whether or not the money I cabled up has reached my bank account. The week following I should be involved in the USAID study. Which puts us around Dec. 5th which is our first anniversary in St Vincent and a major milestone in itself. In some ways it's so hard to believe that we've been here so long. 13 months away from home.

In many ways the change of job is a Godsend. It gives me something to look forward to returning to. In any other case, it would be difficult to come back. The heat, the feeling of being alien, the dogs(!) mosquitoes and ants it can really burn you out especially when you know of a place where those things aren't a bother. I suppose that dogs are still number one on my list of hassles. Uninterrupted sleep is an unknown commodity lately and I'm plenty vexed at Maxine for placing her pups just outside our bedroom window. There seems to be no place to find peace anymore. No quiet evenings relaxing. No nights rest. You can tell how it's affecting me from the tone of this entry. I'm tired and touchy. And less willing to deal with

the demands of third world living. Deb and I have even considered moving but Mrs Douyon is much too nice to pull out on. She's become a good friend and saying 'goodbye' would be much too painful. Our lives have settled down now. We have our routines and expectations and though life isn't free and easy (we're still constrained by our histories) it is tolerable and happy in the main. Sure we still feel too constrained, too different, to really fit in. We're still hassled by school kids and local "toughs" who get enjoyment from hassling white people but the impact on us is not so great. We shrug it off for what it is, mindless discrimination. But the alternatives carry equal anxiety for us. Can we cope with readjusting to the US life. My visit to Barbados gave me a taste of the US in microcosm and I'm not sure I liked it. I will seek refuge in our folks houses. Watching tv, skiing and walking about. But even 22 days seems too long to that experience. But the nice thing about the journal is that the entries compressed time. I need to live out the minutes and hours and days until we step on the plane in St Vincent on December 14th.

29/11/83

Countdown to ecstasy? I'm not exactly sure what to expect on arriving to the states. There is a certain amount of anxiety but an equal amount of joyful anticipation. Just 15 days! I can hardly believe it will happen. I am equally anxious about our travel arrangements. We talked to Mom Dad Todd Gram and Gramps on Sunday. Dad ran the tickets through on Visa and had them sent by certified mail (or registered we're not clear on what form was used). Anyway, now we will be anxiously eyeing the mailbox starting next Monday to see if they successfully ride the gauntlet of overseas mail handling. Mom and Gram both said they'd sent small packages months ago and they never arrived. Worse still is the fact that a PO worker was caught stealing and opening (then discarding) mail from overseas. Presumably looking for money. I'm afraid our mail has been waylaid somewhere along the line and fearful that our tickets will meet a similar fate. Oh well, we'll just wait and see and hope that the worst hasn't happened.

We are busily trying to get our Christmas cards off. And also decide on and purchase the final Christmas presents this weekend. Next week will be agony. Not much is going on with my job transfer. Most likely because Jethro is in Miami for the week and he is the "in" at Marketing Corporation. I don't anticipate much activity in the job circle during the next two weeks but I'm hopeful that the hitches are worked out during our holiday so that I can run once I'm back. Oh, I've been involved in a few assorted projects but nothing of very great significance. I'm just biding my time, burning up energy in our travel arrangements. It will be a difficult two weeks and a portent of things to come next year about this time. I expect that COS will be an even bigger hassle and if our 14 months since leaving the US passed quickly, the 11 or less months until COS should fly by. Especially if we squeeze in a trip to Europe but those plans must rest until we return. Next year might be as mixed a bag as this one was.

A difficulty arises in trying to convey the essence of this first PC year to my family and friends when we are stateside. Our photo album is incomplete and one-sided. We've overstressed the beautiful tourist side of our experience and left out the poverty and cultural differences. Our letters must convey some of that experience

but the photographs will not. I must try to capture that when I return.

I've noticed a tendency to move away from feelings and insights in both my letters and journal writing and more towards mundane and actually boring drivel about job hassles and plans for travel. The urgency of my writing is lost. That opening of the soul and heart which was so essential at the outset of this journey seems difficult to get in touch with. I still experience just what I experienced 12 months ago but it's a part of me. It's living it now rather than observing. I know must learn to open myself up and write about day-to-day experiences which are a part of my life but may not be a part of me once I've left.

5/12/83

So a year has come and gone here. I am amazed. And giving credit where credit is due, let me say that it is only through the Grace of God that I have made it this far in this state. I'm almost ebullient in my outlook. Not only because of our now imminent return to SLC rather more in spite of it. I give Him praise for such a marvelous thing.

So the milestone has passed: one finished, one to go and I'm both anxious and excited about it. The past year has been one of nearly infinite challenge. The challenge of learning to live in a different culture, of learning to live in apparent uselessness of trying to live so far from established family and friends. A personal challenge and a spiritual one. One that will probably affect me for years to come and one which will never be forgotten.

But I'm having trouble on focusing on that. With our trip to the states looming on the horizon it is hard to focus on anything else. The 8 days that stand between now and then seem interminable and my mind is wandering. It's difficult to write. It could be because I'm not feeling all that well. Friday night there was a party for the lab folks (Greg and Joan) which left me with a tremendous hangover on Saturday. I managed to survive that but ended up feverish and drained on Sunday. Last night it was alternatively chills and sweats and this morning I still feel bleah. I may spend the afternoon at home and take it easy. I can't seem to get motivated for much else.

We're still waiting on our tickets too. I received a few letters and birthday cards last week one of which was postmarked the same day as our tickets were mailed. So they can't be too far behind. The tickets are the last link in the chain to home. Once forged, we can relax and concentrate on the final preparations, packing & presents. I don't like to be over prepared to leave. Seems to stretch out the interval to leaving. Hopefully, I'll take next week off from Monday afternoon onward and I'll take care of all the last minute stuff. It still seems a long way off but I imagine it will go very quickly.

15/2/84 !!

Almost two months have elapsed since the last entry. Christmas has come & gone (Gads what a joyful experience!) We're now back, settled in and seemingly, rushing headlong into the year. To review:

Our tickets finally did arrive, by regular mail and all in good shape. The itinerary had changed once again but our 1 day St Vincent SLC route stayed intact (thank goodness). We spent a busy week preparing to leave. Buy gifts and carefully packing it all away for the 4000 plus miles to SLC. My bleah feelings turned out to be the measles!! I was laid up almost the entire week and probably prolonged the suffering through my frequent excursions out into town to buy last minute items. Excitement and anticipation ran so high! I must have had no adrenaline left by the time I stepped onto the plane.

Our departure morning began early. We got up about 4:30 a.m. to close things up and pack the final items. We had dinner the night before at Bienamen's so were spared the hassle of cooking and cleaning and were only left with packing and carefully setting out our tickets and travel documents so we wouldn't misplace them at the last minute. Awaking in darkness only minutes (seemingly) after putting our heads down we collected our stuff and waited for Father Russ, who had graciously offered to take us to the airport. It was a gorgeous pre-dawn night. I noticed a particularly bright star in the east. Blazing away much as had the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem. Perhaps it is a cliché but it was to be a beacon for our departure. Russ finally arrived as dawn and a light rain broke upon St Vincent. Absolutely beautiful. We arrived in good order, passed through immigration check our bags and awaited our flight. Of course it was late. Turns out on Wednesday the LIAT flight to Barbados doesn't pass through Grenada so we waited until 7:10 to board (rather than 6:20 as anticipated). Arriving at 8:10 we had a 3-hour wait and wander for the Eastern flight to Miami. The Eastern counter didn't open until 9:30 whence we checked our bags and had a leisurely breakfast. Gads! Were my knees knocking and heart racing as we boarded the flight for our first visit Stateside in over a year? I don't remember. I just remember the relaxation and warm snuggling feeling of being with Deb as we flew home!!

During the flight I continuously imbibed Tab and reviewed our itinerary through various airports until we got to Salt Lake. Change planes and clear customs in Miami. Fly to Atlanta and change planes. Fly to Denver then on to SLC. Our timing, though close was adequate for relaxation. I thought.

Miami was wonderful but our time short. We cleared immigration (no sweat) then waited waited and agonized as our bags did not appear at the claim carousel (which had refused to operate). With clock ticking 45-30-15 minutes we finally collected our luggage and weaved our way over to customs for the Great Inquisition. No problems. With all the junk (especially agriculturally related) I figured hours in customs. The inspector (God bless him) only requested that we open one box of candy and with that we were on our way, dumped our stuff at the Eastern desk (I'm glad to be rid of it) and cruised out to the gate. (I have forgotten to mention how my steel-toed shoes consistently set off the metal detectors at the airport security gates. That was one other aggravation!

No problem at the gate. We were on board within minutes to spare and smoothly on our way to Atlanta. This flight too was spent consuming TABs at every opportunity and trying to troubleshoot our next plane change. But this plane, to was big (L1011) (Barbados to Miami was an A300 Airbus comfortable beautiful but the overhead racks sway ominously during taxi and the hydraulics are incredibly noisy).Oops another point forgotten. When we arrived at the gate to board our flight to Atlanta there was a HUGE line waiting. At least 150 people waiting to get boarding passes. I was amazed at two things: The patience with which the Eastern agent (only one) dispatched his job and the amicability of the boarding passengers. Everybody seemed so relaxed, happy and smiling. I may be paranoid but people in St Vincent seemed almost distant and angry in comparison. This was the surprise. Having anticipated a reverse culture shock of uptight and rush rush Americans we were pleased to find nearly the opposite. Friendly, helpful people everywhere. Perhaps it was the season (to be jolly) or just the fact that we must have been beaming like lunatics for being back in the states. Either way it was an unanticipated attitude

Between Atlanta and Denver I think we finally burnt out. We were on the final leg. Had a nice dinner did some reading but mostly stared out the blackness to watch the states slowly pass by. After an interminable wait in Denver, Deb slept on the mostly empty flight to SLC.

What a welcome site that familiar lighted checkerboard city outline was as it peaked through the clouds. The light drizzle did nothing to dampen my spirits and there is absolutely no way to describe the sight of my mom running down the connecting 'tube' to greet us. Ecstasy, relief? So much love. Hugs and kisses and smiles and more hugs and kisses and bigger smiles. And an insane level of talk. Everybody asking questions nobody listening and answering at the same time. Even Pastor Paul was there! It was a busy mob who walked down to baggage claim then out into the near freezing, wet weather outside. Lovely! glorious. After 14 months of plus 70° weather, COLD! The rain turned to snow as we drove up the benches. Mounds of it. White and invitingly cold and soft. It was so nice to be home! The three weeks at home weren't as chaotic as I had anticipated. Granted, we always seemed a step behind our plans but there were at least moments of relaxation to talk to family and friends, see a few videos and a movie (hardly any television). Mostly it was just the reveling in love that we missed so dearly in St Vincent.

Soon after arriving in SLC we took off to Boise to stay with Deb's folks. Hard to imagine driving 6 hours continuously over nicely paved (though at times slippery) roads. Open countryside and so uninhabited. Beautiful snow filled valleys. Sage, scrub desert. So unlike St Vincent. Boise was our medical depot when we took care of dental work and eyes (outrageously expensive!). Bought some stuff for other PCVs, photo processing Etc. Mostly we got things done. Deb tried as much as she could to be with family and friends. I mostly read and daydreamed. Tearful parting then back to Salt Lake the day before Christmas Eve (with some car trouble in -30 wind chill weather). Ah, it was nice to be back.

The Salt Lake visit was a bit more hectic with some people to visit, things to buy and my sister and brother-in-law with two little ones for the holidays. food food and plenty talk. I skied a day (just to say I had done it) and shoveled plenty of snow. We had good times at church, Deb saw some peers at work and talked shop, I visited the Placement Center for the inevitable plans to re-enter the US labor force next year. All said and done, we did what we wanted, saw who we wanted to see bought our essentials and relaxed when we could. I've got no complaints about it. It was a lovely time and one which I will always identify as 'coming home'.

That's not a very comprehensive sketch. but a great deal of time was spent socializing and relaxing with a fair amount of running errands.

17/2/84

Not exactly exciting stuff but at least we had a chance to slow down and enjoy ourselves which was exactly what we wanted. The reunion was the enjoyable exciting part the rest of the time was spent 'settling in'.

The return trip was a bit of an ordeal. Our plane left early so we were up early to finish packing and seeing two last-minute details. One detail we managed to overlook were our house keys and key to our lock for our bags. Seems in the rush they were left forgotten at the house, a fact not discovered until we were checking in at the airport. It was too late to go back and find them (I wasn't sure where they were) so I told Mom to look for them and told her we would call and make arrangements for them when we were laying over in Denver. Once in Denver however we couldn't reach anyone at home. And a desperate collect call to my father's office produced no information. So we boarded our flight to Miami with questions about how we would get into our house in St Vincent.

When we arrived in Miami we met a friend who happened to be flying out that same day to Barbados. He told us that Eastern might change our reservations so that we might also be able to fly out that evening with him. After loading up at the baggage claim we stumbled our way to the Eastern desk, checked our bags through to Barbados and got a standby boarding pass. Since we then had some time to kill, I decided to call home and find out the status of the great key search. Mom told me that she had found them and had persuaded a kindly Eastern agent to forward them for pickup the next morning in Miami at the passenger service desk. Great! We would be in Barbados.

We immediately sought out the Passenger Service desk and found none. But an agent said that it was probably sent via Sprint their overnight package service (we described to her what mom had told us: The SL agent had put the envelope containing the keys in a blue bag which was then placed in a box. "Yes, that sounds like Sprint" she said. So we hustled off to the Sprint office to have the keys forwarded to Barbados. "That will cost you an additional \$60" said the agent. So our dilemma grew. Should we #1!) forget the keys, have Sprint return them to Salt

Lake (no charge) and we would deal with breaking in when we got to St Vincent. #2) Pay the money to forward them and spend an extra night in Barbados (approx cost \$130) or #3 Stay the night in Miami and get the keys in the morning. After much hemming and hawing we decided on #3 and, sans luggage, checked into a cheap hotel which remarkably gave discounts to PCVs. The next afternoon, we returned to the airport in our washed-in-the-sink look clothes and discovered, to our complete horror, that there were no packages there fFor us. As a last resort we decided to check baggage claim for a box with our name on it. Voila! There was a box as big as a suitcase which had our name on it. Inside the box was a sleeping bag size sack and inside of that was a large envelope containing a small cardboard square with keys taped to it. The errant keys had found their way!

Much relieved, we boarded our plane to Barbados, hoping our luggage hadn't disappeared (along with our new tape player). After consuming as many TABs as my over-stressed kidneys could handle we arrived back in Barbados, failed to find our luggage at overnight claim and found them quietly waiting for us undisturbed in the center of the baggage claim building. But our ordeal was just the beginning. Before leaving St Vincent I had asked around to find out if there was a cheap guest house in Barbados near the airport and was told of one about a ½ mile from Grantley Adams that ran something like \$8 US a night was called the Shalamar or something like that. So Deb and I had counted on staying there when we arrived. After repeated questioning of the Bajan taxi drivers we determined it was the Shan-lon. We so we packed our many bundles into the cab and rode the 1/2 mile to the Shan-lon. The rate was nowhere close to \$8 US. It was \$37.50 US. Much too much so we stuffed ourselves into the cab and returned to the airport for an overnight stay. The cab driver insisted that the fare was \$24 B-dos \$12 to the Shan-lon and \$12 back, outrageous! I paid him \$17 Barbados (still way too much) and we settled into a long night of fitful sleep in a drafty terminal (noisy too). Fortunately we were able to get an early flight out to St Vincent. but not until after LIAT squeezed us for 20 kg of overweight luggage (which I had weighed in Salt Lake - 10 kg over) LIAT has some very company favorable scales! Anyway we managed to get us and our baggage back to St Vincent and were we ever glad to be back home! Some 9,000 miles of travel behind us, we opened the door to our house (thank goodness), dropped our bags, caught a shower and drifted off for our first real sleep in 48 hours.