

Settling in...

After a month or so, Deb and I began to get a little more settled. We would still experience some more extreme culture shock (you can see it beginning) but we know what our days will be like, even though we still struggle to accept all we see.

- 28/1/83
- Jan 31 1983
- Feb 4
- Feb 8 1983
- Feb 11 1983
- 14/2/83
- 28/2/83
- 1/3/83
- 4/3/83

28/1/83

Not feeling 100% just now but wanted to finish out the week on a positive, constructive note. Work has been a “no surprise” affair except, I finally got off my duff and visited with Jeff Venner over at the Dept of Labor. He is a really on the ball guy and sounds as though he has got good ideas. I think he will use me and I am trying to ‘temper’ my excitement. I remember feeling optimistic about Mr. Gaynes too. I still have a lot I could do in the Ministry of Finance but I have been stymied for now. I did see Mr. Gaynes on Mon. He told me to back, which I did and he put me off and said he would see me. He never came. I have spent nearly all week sitting here (save Tuesday) hoping for him to come by.. No luck. Mr Venner seems ambitious enough to keep me busy. He has two people in Manpower & Training that need training themselves. He said something about starting an employment bureau and also send his new staff out for training in Jamaica or Guyana. In all, I basically begged him to have me do something. Monday we’ll meet for a longer period of time so we can do a more thorough needs assessment. In all cases, there is a glimmer of hope that my idleness will end. I’m sure looking forward to a change of pace.

Got a lot of letters this week (earlier) and have spent the balance trying to answer them all. It certainly is good to get mail from home. I can just picture the house in SLC and the front room/kitchen people sprawled comfortably around the house, relaxing after a day of work. Though sometimes painful, those memories are a catalyst for me to ‘hang in there’. I look forward to the reunion at Christmas, but also to how this year is going to unfold. My purpose here is still a blank slate. For the nearly two months we have been in SVG I have done little but get a garden going. I haven’t changed anyone or anything. I don’t think I’ve made a difference but then again, How will I know? The people of the street aren’t as intimidating but they still seem to react the same. I feel different but how has that influenced the state of affairs in SVG? I don’t know. Sometimes, I don’t care. For two reasons: God put me in SVG for a purpose. One that perhaps I’ll never know. 2 I’m learning so much that at least I will have benefited from being here (though I feel a bit guilty and selfish) But it also humbles me. Even more than my two months of idleness. Because I may not, even though I work my buns off, make any perceptible difference in life in SVG.

Jan 31 1983

Monday mornings. I hate em. I am unusually lethargic and unmotivated. I should go see Mr. Gaines. I need to go to the wharf & to the tourism dept. Most I just want to sit here. Rivited in immobility. Doing anything at work has become quite a chore. I'm excited by the possibility that something might come of my visit this afternoon at the Dept of Labor. Gads. I hope something happens. I doubt I can put up with this under (or non-) utilization much longer. No doubt I am learning patience. At this rate, I'm learning to be THE most patient man in the world.

Talked to mom yesterday. It was so wonderful to hear all their voices. We talked for about 25 min (probably cost a BUNDLE) but it was certainly worth it. We had to straighten up a lot of 'fuzzy' rumors and misinformation. But it was certainly worth it. we had to straighten up a lot of fuzzy rumors and misinformation. I must learn to be clearer in my written correspondence. sometimes I think I shouldn't write at all because it seems to do less for understanding. Anyway the phone call cleared up a lot of the rough edges at least I know what was going on.

After the phone call the afternoon settled into a kind of melancholy. Both Deb and I felt "bleah". So we decided to go out to dinner and a show with Joan, Greg and "Anchor". It did a great deal for our morale. But for the last few days I've been feeling wrung out achy tired and bleah. No fever no flu. Just kind of punk. Don't know if it's physical or psychological. Diet? Food poisoning? Too liberal use of insecticide around the house? Whatever it is, I wish it would go away. I have a hard enough time being with it when I'm healthy.

Feb 4

End of week. Peculiar perspective having both first and last Impressions on this first week and anniversary of our second month on St. Vincent. Amazing! I would have thought that this month would have crawled from the amount of sitting I have done in this office. At least our garden is in! (progress must be noted however small). The cabbages and lettuce have already begun climbing out of the ground. Hope the bugs don't destroy them. Anyway (as I wander everywhere) the week is finished. Two months is finished (only 22 left), and soon I'll be done for the day.

Deb cried quite a bit last night. She's lost two patients this week. Unnecessary deaths in that the skills, tech, meds or nothingn position unnecessary. She's watching a 16-year-old quad slowly degrade into as simple as a lack of pillows to keep him in proper death is an unpleasant experience (to say the least) but e of human life. Her sorrow poured out last night at this



wastage.

I got angry at a system that lets people die, also for what it

is doing to a compassionate caring individual like Debbie. Sometimes (most times)I want to go home just to protect her. But I realize that the good she is doing for her patients and the people she works with is far more important than my agonizing over her sorrow. Should she choose to leave here (which would be highly unlikely) I would discuss it with her then go (or stay) whatever the results of discussion pointed to. But I want to be rid of this sorry place for her sake. I don't see the heartbreak, I only hear about it or feel it. To me, boredom is my greatest enemy while Debbie is involved in fighting death itself. She's been too tired lately and I'm worried about her. She's fragile and yet so tough. I just feel inadequate to help her cope.I just listen and tell her whether I understand or not. but I can't do more. I can't shake up the hospital system, manage it competently and change the system in which it works. I'm powerless to do anything and that impotence gnaws at me.

But the problem is greater than just an inept run hospital. it goes far beyond a cumbersome, disorganized government. The problem lies with the people. as it always does. Because hospitals and governments are merely responses to people's needs. They aren't the needs themselves. The people need to take responsibility for themselves. They can no longer afford to drift aimlessly about. Waiting for Godot. The fathers of the children need to acknowledge their responsibility. The women need to stand up for their rights and follow up on the power and responsibility they already have. I agree that the people of St Vincent (and the EC generally) need to bail out on the slave excuse and realize they are an important people with important ideas to share with the rest of the world. Until that time, people like Debbie will be torn by the sorrow and futility of life here.

Feb 8 1983

Busy day yesterday. Busy weekend I wish the weeks would pass as quickly as the weekends. It seems I never have enough time to get it all done. I tend to drag a bit anyway. But weekends are so much fun. I'm wishing they were 3 days long.

I talked with Van Keen yesterday morning and that's why the day went quickly by. He seemed more interested in 'shooting the breeze' than in finding out how my position was going here. He wasn't really surprised or alarmed that I wasn't intensely (or even mildly). He wasn't really terribly helpful in trying to relieve the bottlenecks I have been experiencing. Mostly, he wanted to make sure that I was getting involved in a secondary project so that I could constructively direct my frustrations. Actually, that's about all I expected him to do. The ambiguity of PC has not been relieved much. I think I'm pretty much responsible for my own business so I don't really expect PC to be helping me through. But I was rather surprised at his lack of concern. But that's the West Indian way.

I spent the PM side of the day writing letters. I've been writing quite a bit lately and have felt a bit guilty for pushing Debbie into getting letters off to her friends and relatives. Usually, I'll write about half and let her finish. Still, whether she wants to write or not should be her business. She's been so busy at work that she has no time to write while there and she been doing more afternoon 'home visits' so often she's well into the evening, after dinner, before she's composed enough to sit and write. I have more to write (letters). There is always someone to write.

This writing fetish is a part of a multi-dimensional lifestyle that seems to be evolving out of this EC/PC experience. First and foremost, is this nagging question of why the Lord put me here. With all my free time, I wonder just what the heck I'm supposed to be doing in St Vincent. My job hasn't exactly been a "dynamite" experience. I'm restless inside me to begin some concrete community work but nothing has materialized yet. Our lifestyle at the cottage has been the most pleasing, has the most permanence and gives me the most security. Outside of that, things still remain a bit 'fuzzy'. My job is 'fuzzy'. My community involvement is 'fuzzy'. I'm praying that God will bring them into sharp focus. But through it all, has been this ribbon of literature. both reading and writing. I've been reading Michner novels (on my fourth one) which has been a delight and escape for me. and I've been writing. Writing letters, writing in this journal. For I love to create visual images on paper. The emotions flow on paper. Sometimes I tentatively hope that the Lord has given me this gift as both a personal joy and vocation. Though I cannot see myself in an office setting (for long) I can see myself as a writer. Watching seasons pass in front of my desk as I spill out me on paper. I have no desire to talk about myself as much as I can relate the world through myself. I can't write fiction but I can write a prosy 'the way I see it' kind of story.

When I was a child, I had an overwhelming, driving desire to be able to write songs. Not so much music, as a song. I found my poetry found greater life at the piano and when I hurt, really hurt God blessed me with an ability to pour out my hurt through music. The keenness of that ability waned as my hurt subsided. I don't think I could write as meaningful music now. but now the challenge is survival. Survival in a foreign culture. Survival without the immediate constant support of my family. Survival through my love for Debbie. All this creates a low but constant level of anxiety and perhaps that is why I have become more prolific. but I hope not. I hope it's the beginning of a long relationship with the pen. I have always wanted to write professionally (this is my deepest secret for a writer really does no 'work'). I don't know if this journal shall ever be read on printed " for profit " basis. But what I do know that God provides gifts on a long and short-term basis as His need dictates. This Peace Corps experience is filled with hidden possibilities and only time will tell what

they are.

Feb 11 1983

Friday! Afternoon yet. I'm glad to be done with this week. A new low in productivity. It's such an anxiety producing no-win situation here. If I remain here in my office & just read and keep myself otherwise occupied, I become anxious out of my guilt and not "doing my job", whatever that is. It's also boring! But to change the situation, that is, do something, I need to risk. To risk to cause anxiety, so to change from inactivity to activity also causes anxiety. I obviously over-estimated my workload even though I didn't think I'd be doing much to start with. I'm not doing much, I'm doing nothing. I operate in a completely open system here. I can work or not work at my convenience. No one has told me what to do (darn it) so I create my own situation. I'm needed but "temporarily" superfluous. Gads, I just wish that I had more to do. My research for the Manpower report is crawling along. But I will get to attend 4, ½ day training seminars which will at least change the pace a bit. And I will get to meet some higher-ups which may facilitate other projects over the long run.

I'm looking forward to this weekend. Deb and I hope to go with the Bienamens to Villa tomorrow a.m. and do some snorkeling. We also hope to attend a cricket match in the afternoon. Sunday, we plan to climb Sufriere with some other PCVs. We need the exercise and need to get out. I'm constantly hatching plans to go somewhere for Easter weekend. I know that some charters are available to B-Dos, Grenada and Trinidad. Our 6-month reunion is supposed to be in St Lucia so it's a low priority to go there even though it may have a charter to it. I'd like to go north to Antigua (a Lutheran Church is rumored to be there) or Saint Kitts/Nevis. We'll have to see. At least this weekend and next week will be busy, somewhat.

Noticed in my last few letters stateside that I talked a lot about my return travel arrangements. The need & desire to go home hasn't been reduced in intensity, just in frequency and duration. I ran into a Mormon missionary from Kuna (Elder Manning) Idaho. I was actually happy to see him! He had that distinctive Western US accent and I could have talked with him for hours. No doubt we'll have him and his "brother" over for dinner in the next 2 months. Just to cure a little homesickness.

I've been preoccupied with my 10th High School reunion for some bizarre reason. It's next year and most assuredly, I'll miss it unless Deb and I manage to save \$15,000EC between now and then. we're already going to Salt Lake City for Christmas (\$5,000EC). Europe after COS (\$6,000EC). A flight to Chicago would cost at least \$4,000EC. But oh how I'd love to see where the rest of my class of 1974 have ended up. Maybe, just maybe, we'll find the money. There's always that possibility.

14/2/83

Valentine's Day and a Monday. I hate Mondays for the usual reasons. Even more so for my tremendous 'underwork' load. I have here. I'm becoming bitter and angry and frustrated at this position I'm in. The days don't drag but I hardly feel satisfied at the end. I could go on in this limbo but it's undermining my enthusiasm. To walk away from this place each day knowing that the work done is hardly perceptible is a bit depressing on a regular basis. I will begin writing the manpower report by months end but after 2 months of preparation I hardly feel industrious. But it will provide a forecast and plan for the future. I can't help but wonder what the Lord has in store for me.

Sufriere was an awesome experience. It's really quite humbling to be at the mouth of such a vast source of lava that flows off precipitously.



28/2/83

I will return to Sufriere later. It's been nearly (actually exactly) 2 weeks since I last managed to write in this journal. The reason such a long time has lapsed since I last wrote has been mainly due to my participation in a training workshop with the OECS over the past two weeks. The first week was spent in a top mgt information seminar to inform the top managers of what their middle managers were going to be receiving in their training. The four half day sessions were informative to me and gave me the first inklings that there might just be a way to enlist support in using my skills and abilities. The group talked about its problems in the St Vincent public service. Most of them were HR related. In fact, I was amazed at how their contributions pointed strongly to a need for a coordinated human resource development function. One of the "Permanent Secretaries" even said "What all this is telling me is that we need a better human resource department". Gads, I almost dropped dead! A bit later, the bubble was burst by Jeff Venner (labor commissioner) who mentioned that this particular group was very good at identifying problems but very slow in finding and implementing solutions. It was at that time I remembered that in 1970 and again in 1978 it was recommended that an O&M section be formed to assist in assessing and implementing HR functions. These folks appeared to be keenly aware of the problems facing the effective use of Human Resources because the problem had been around for 13 years or more. I began to get depressed again. I am amazed at the recalcitrance of this society. I'm still surprised that they managed to decide upon, and Implement their own independence. They must have begun their separation back at the turn of the century.

My depression was short-lived because of the mid-mgt group which came on the scene the following Monday. These folks are a bit more down to earth and perhaps a bit too pessimistic about their ability to change anything. The slightest pessimism from them almost totally demoralizes me for if they can't make a difference in the system, how am I to? Anyway, the realism was worth the added burden of pessimism. During the week we had a chance to check each other out. I had a chance to be visible, willing and able to help them and they had a chance to establish my credibility. That credibility and visibility was greatly enhanced by the OECS folks soliciting my opinion and participation in the training. For that I will be forever grateful. Jack and Ermine (the trainers) were wonderful. Anyway, I have now established contacts and credibility within the SVGPS. I plan to forge ahead with the job descriptions but also assist in problem solving on a one-to-one basis. No doubt I'll be doing some training too. Now my fear is in my own competence as a trainer and HR advisor. I still feel a bit too academic and would like some more experience in training hands on. God willing, I get I'll get that. but I also know that even an inexperienced attempt to coordinate and facilitate the HR development function will be better than what is available now. Outside consultants and advisors that remain in St Vincent only a short time are virtually worthless because of the transference of skills is not ongoing. Even this OECS thing would fail without having me to follow up and participate in the growth process now started. Perhaps I'm overselling myself again. But this MDA position would be a great stepping stone to establishing a coordinated and effective HR program.

Enough of business. I nearly died of an excruciating headache and ultra high fever last week but I got better. Deb's at home with the same symptoms today. Funny how I hope that it will be serious enough to be shipped home (not in a pine box). You see, even though my job situation has improved immensely I'm still running scared at being here. I wonder if I'll ever be comfortable with living here.

1/3/83

It seems as though as soon as I find myself starting to enjoy myself here, something comes along to spoil it. It might be a long night session at the Ambassador's club or a constantly barking dog that interrupts my sleep. It might be an offhand comment by a local. It could be an army of ants that invade some foodstuffs, mosquitoes, or a 40 legs. But more or less it's always something that prevents me from truly relaxing and enjoying myself. Even the form of some enjoyment has changed. In the states it could have been watching TV or going to a movie. Maybe a drive in the mountains. None of that is available to us. Relaxation must come through swimming, walking (doubtful because it is hot), or reading. Also, conversation with friends or other PCV's might be one form of entertainment. But, it never seems to be enough to allow me to just rest. Being a PCV is a 24-hour a day job. Sometimes you'd just like to scream and run away.

Turns out Deb's got a mild case of dengue fever. Which means I've had it twice. Same symptoms, high fever, headache and, now that we think about it, a rash (little red spots). The headache is the worst part. Seemed to last days. Deb's somewhat glad that we've had it. At least we know what to expect.



Got some more info about job. Turns out we had two gentlemen in last week to do some organizational analysis. I'm constantly amazed about how I've been on target with some of the things I've felt needed to be done. First, it was a training program in job analysis which the OECS came in to do. Second it was a Manpower forecast I felt was needed and which a fellow from the UN is putting together. Now it's an organizational analysis which I felt was needed at the very start. I'm feeling a bit more confident about the direction I've chosen even if I'm not totally confident about being in St VG.

4/3/83

Not being totally confident about being in St Vincent I'm amazed I said that. Some things that seem revelatory are in essence a prior thought brought into full consciousness. Two days ago a team from CHP in Jamaica came to SVG to talk about prior training and get more job related material on the next group from Van K. Pearl (old friend from CHP) was one of the folks who visited. As we talked (at great length) I came to the 'sudden' realization that I wasn't very happy here. Fact was she asked if I thought I'd ET and I said "Yes". She agreed and we went on to talk about the cultural things which make my satisfaction with being here so difficult to come by. When I brought up the things to Deb, she became immediately defensive and panicked. Presumably because she thought I was miserable and she thought that the only reason I was staying here was "to make her happy". Granted, the fact that Deb is a very valuable and needed person here does indeed influence my decisions about this place. But also my need to see if I can survive and also to develop #1) a competence in HR management, and #2) some sense of whether or not this is the type of work I want to be doing. It's a personal as well as professional challenge to remain here. I do want to see it through. But I also have adjustment problems and whenever my health (mental and physical) or motivation is undermined, the first thing I think about is going home to the states. Even that is an irritation. I wish I had the maturity and flexibility to adapt to life in the EC without having those urges to run. Perhaps that is another reason I wish to stay. So I can truly feel free and independent to function away from my family friends and familiar surroundings. I guess that would be an emancipating experience.

But this culture, or actually, the process of learning to deal with this culture tends to force one inward rather than outward. I'm feeling distant from God, who put us here. Deb has mentioned feeling distant from me and perhaps I too feel that distance. This whole experience is very upsetting (in a positive way) and perhaps that is forcing Deb and I into a process of introspection as we assimilate and acculturate to living in St Vincent. I don't know. I do know that as of right now, I'm feeling a bit alone and unhappy. A distance from God and my wife. The needed cure is perhaps prayer and talk. Talk to God, talk to my wife.

