

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.

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