

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.

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