



# Brandell e-Scr@pbook

*A monthly report on our life in Vanuatu*



We were all very excited to welcome the Oklahoma Brandells to Vanuatu this month (pictured here in front of the mighty Yasur Volcano). So much fun was had by all! Hope you enjoy getting to read about our experiences this month...

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 "WALK-A-BOUT"

I was glad to be invited by Aaron and several Christians from Etas Village to join them on a walk-a-bout this month. Many projects and works came to a completion at the end of May, and so we all wanted to start June off with a little "guy-time." Aaron and I dropped Kaela off at school about 7:30 and headed to Etas, where we joined up with Sam, Tom, Timothy and a few other locals. Our journey was to take us to a river, but I



*From the home-front...*

Our house was definitely a different place this month with the OK Brandells here! While it was somewhat tight quarters, no one seemed to mind since we were all together. And I must admit that Titus and Lexi enjoyed waking up their aunts every morning a little too much! Traveling and sight seeing with them was great, but while we were home, I loved having help with the kids, dinner preparation, and keeping the house running smoothly. It was such fun to be together here in Vanuatu.

PBK started this month after much planning and prayer. It went great...the kids had never seen anything like it and loved every minute of it. In this culture, it's can be difficult to find women willing to lead and I was proud of the ladies who were willing to do so this month! I believe that the kids who come will be positively affected for years to come. I can see the future of the church in Vanuatu as I look at their sweet faces, and that future looks good. Please pray for these children as we teach them the truth and train them to follow God and His word. And please remember the local Christians in your prayers as they strive to grow up in their faith, remain faithful to the Lord and reach others with the truth of the gospel.

We love you all.  
 - Shawnda





*Tom cooking a lunch of chicken wings and bananas*

didn't really know any more details than that.

We started off down the gravel road outside of Sam's house, walked through the city dump (shew-weee!), and headed off into the bush. We stopped briefly at a beautiful waterfall, where I fell in walking across on the stones ... everyone enjoyed a good laugh.

After a two-hour hike at a quick pace, we made it to our destination. Tom started getting a fire ready to cook our lunch, while the rest of us went exploring a bit. We made our way to a turn in the river, where there was also a good sized pool of water. Several went fishing (some with a rod, reel & lure, some with fishing line attached to a stick with a worm tied on, and some with a spear gun and diving mask). Not being much of a fisherman myself, I just laid down on a sandy patch and took a short nap. After lunch, we all took turns throwing stones at a certain branch on the other side of the river - just something to pass the time.



*A bush feast*

While we really didn't "do" all that much, I thoroughly enjoyed the time away. I got to see a side of Vanuatu I had not yet seen, and spent some time bonding with local Christians. The experience was well worth the exhausting four hour round-trip trek, and I am already looking forward to the next opportunity!

PIKININI BAEBOL KLAB

During his most recent visit, Wayne Burger led our team in a study of the book of Luke. During that study, our eyes were reopened to the example Jesus put forth regarding the importance of focusing on children. Jesus was a very busy man - He had much to accomplish in a very confined time frame. It's no wonder that rebuking the children when they came to would only disturb His work. However, Jesus showed the importance of children when He said, "do not hinder them from coming to Me." (Mt 19:14).

From that spark, Shawnda and Cindy began ways to reach out more effectively to the children of Vila and Etas. They settled on a desire to establish a children's Bible club, and when the ladies showed their excitement at the idea, a new ministry was born.



Much planning, perspiration went into the first ever meeting of the Pikinini Baebol Klab. Shawnda and Cindy agreed to take care of the lesson and puppet show, while the local ladies divvied up the other responsibilities - singing, craft, snacks, memory work and games. Shawnda and Cindy met, the local ladies met, they all met together. Flexon, Claude and I met one Saturday morning to pass out invitations in the area



surrounding the church building. Signs were designed, songs were translated and practiced, crafts were planned, a puppet stage was constructed ... and everyone pitched in! Even before the first club meeting took place I had decided that PBK was a success, if for no other reason than that the church was working together to serve the Lord!

The first meeting was held on June 27, and meetings are now scheduled for the last Saturday of every month. We had a bus load of kids and moms from Etas Village, and several more children from Vila, including several visitors from the community. We sent all the children home with invitations to give to their parents offering Bible studies, correspondence courses, and a request to visit our regular worship services.

The theme for the first meeting was “Keeping God’s Earth Beautiful” - focusing on our responsibility to take care of the earth, specifically by not littering it with garbage. To reinforce the lesson, the children decorated “litter-lookers” made out of toilet paper rolls during the craft time, and then put them to good use during a litter scavenger hunt. On the way home, Kaela exclaimed, “Mom, picking up trash isn’t really a game.” We all got a good laugh out of her perspective.

We are already getting excited about next month’s meeting, and hope that this new ministry will continue to serve as an opportunity for local Christians to take on new responsibilities. Please be praying that the children will be positively impacted by these efforts, and that perhaps we can also reach their parents in the process!



MISSION TRIP TO MALEKULA

Practically since his conversion back in 2005, Flexon has been requesting that we visit his home island of Malekula. The time was finally right for such a trip, and so we traveled to Vanuatu’s second-largest island at the end of June. I contacted our Bible Correspondence Course students that live on Malekula, but was unfortunately not able to meet with any of them during our one week stay. However, we were able to spend a lot of time with Flexon’s extended family, and now that I have my bearings, future trips should be much more effective.



*Norsup “airport”*

From the moment we started planning for our trip, Flexon and his wife Fiona began to show their excitement, and once we touched down in Malekula it was obvious that they were “at home.” I was just glad to be alive when we touched down on the grass/dirt airstrip, as our 8-seater plane seemed awfully small, and our lone pilot awfully young. At the airport (which was



now only a small tin shed connected to a facade - the airport was burned a few years ago due to a land dispute), Flexon went to arrange our transport to his home village of Tulwei (“tool-way”). Though the drive was only about 45 minutes, it took us about 3 hours to get to the village (we were truly following “island time” now).



***A “bush-toilet” - basically a Port-a-Potty sized structure with a one square-foot hole cut out of the floor, placed over a deep trench***

As I have come to expect in Vanuatu, we were greeted very warmly. A new house had been constructed just for our visit, and a new toilet had been dug as well. The sun was setting fast, so we began setting up for our first study. I was pleased with the attendance at the studies each morning/evening, as several members of Flexon’s family had come to Tulwei to take part. As news spread of our presence, more and more came from the community as well. We ranged from 12 to 20 local adults in attendance for the studies. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that several of the villagers regularly listen to our radio program on Sunday afternoons - when I mentioned I was with Christ’s church, they immediately associated me with the radio program and its Bible-based teaching.



***Our accommodation was a traditional village dwelling. Split bamboo woven together for the walls, strips of palm laid on short posts for the floor, and a thatched roof***

Experience has shown us to take it very slowly in instances like these. We could go and baptize an entire village if we pushed hard enough, but these would not be conversions, and so we take it slow. I truly believe that there are several in this village who are truth seekers. I taught 8 lessons in the five days we were there, and I think that provided a good balance - any more would have been too much for one visit. We are already planning our next trip to Tulwei, and request your prayers for the ongoing work in this and other villages.



***Flexon’s sisters preparing “Malekula laplap,” which we had every evening as each family member wanted the honor of preparing a meal for us. Malekula-style means that the laplap is cooked along with a whole chicken, and each bite is dipped in the juices (like gravy) before consuming - no problem as long as you aren’t offended by double-dipping!***



***Lunch is served - I was expected to eat the whole lobster (fresh from the Pacific), and all seven-boiled sweet potatoes [I failed]***



***Gathering for Bible study***



***At the close of our studies, we were honored with a gift of hand-woven mats and yams***



***The children are always one of the best parts of these trips!***

WELCOME TO VANUATU

We were all four very excited to welcome my parents and sisters to Vanuatu. We could hardly wait to introduce them to our adopted homeland.

We worshipped with several congregations while the whole group was here (dad could stay only 3 weeks, but mom and the girls will stay through the end of July). The first Sunday we worshipped in Vila immediately after their plane landed. It was quite an immersion for them since we had a fellowship lunch following services, which meant they got to try new foods immediately. The next Sunday we made the voyage to Marou Village. The sea was quite rough that morning, so we all got soaked on the way over and the way back. The Christians were very welcoming, and they were eager to learn more about my family. After lunch, the locals convinced us to present a family rendition of the “Star-Spangled Banner” and “Oklahoma,” which they all seemed to enjoy. We worshipped with the brethren in Epau on the third Sunday. We were all surprised when Arthur called on Dad to lead the closing praying, and though he was a bit nervous because of the impromptu request and the language barrier, he performed the task admirably.

In addition to spending time with brethren, our family enjoyed several tourist outings. Our first one took us to Tanna Island, home of the “world’s most accessible active volcano.” We stayed in a beautiful resort that overlooked the Pacific, enjoyed our simple island-style bungalows, and ate lots of delightful local produce. The highlight of the trip was our tour to the mouth of the volcano. Following our Sunday morning visit to Marou, we decided to spend a night up north instead of completing the round trip all in one day. There is an unfinished resort that was originally planned to be the most expensive resort in the world (\$45,000 per night). For various reasons the plans fell through, which means that ordinary folk such as us can go and stay on the island (they completed the “entourage quarters” first, so those rooms are available). Before things fell through, the investors had started work on the two main villas, one of which is literally built on/in a huge banyon tree ... think 5-star hotel meets Swiss Family Robinson (had it ever actually been completed). It was quite a sight, and definitely a beautiful setting. Our third and final trip took us for a two-night stay on an island just west of the mainland called Moso. The bungalows there were very basic and right on the beach. The only thing you do inside there is sleep, as even the dining hall is open-air.

It was such pleasure to have my parents and sisters here, and we look forward to more fun times next month with mom and the girls. Family is such a blessing!



*Shawnda, mom and Cori learning to SCUBA dive*



*ever taken a boat to get to church on Sunday morning?*



*new friends in Marou Village*



*The kids loved playing in the sandbox and reading lots of books*



*the church in Epau*