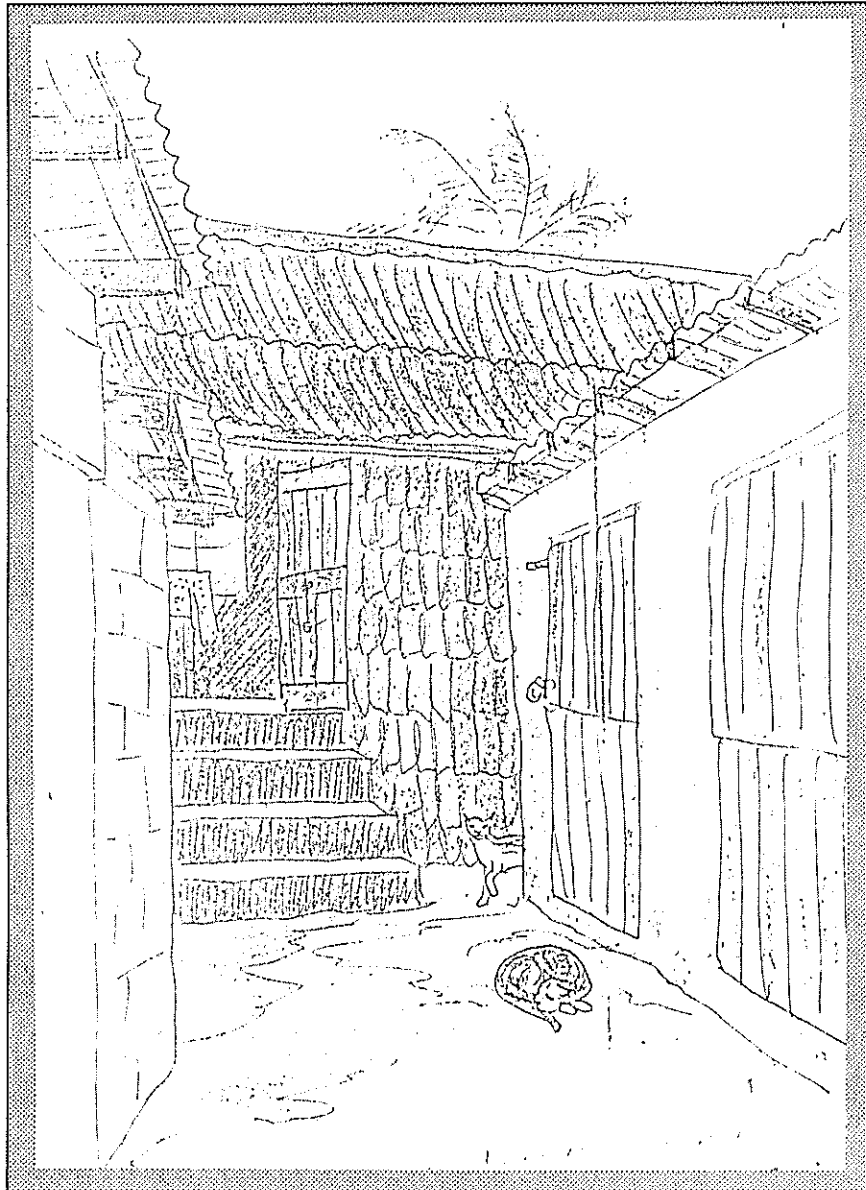


SERIOUS TING

A NEWSLETTER BY VOLUNTEERS, FOR VOLUNTEERS, ABOUT VOLUNTEERS

March 1992

VOLUME 2, NO. 4



The back of Paul's and Ingrid's house, Calibishie, Commonwealth of Dominica. To the right is their kitchen. To the left is the bakery. Drawing courtesy of Ellen Alexander, mother of Elaine Alexander, Dominica. Ellen has written and illustrated children's books.

Serious Ting

A newsletter by volunteers, for volunteers, about volunteers

From the Editors:

Paul and Andy

SERIOUS TING is a simple newsletter reflecting the talents and interests of the PCV in the EC. Short stories, humor, drawings, classified ads, observations, poems, essays, recipes, travel tips, job ideas, etc. are all in the realm of possibility for **SERIOUS TING**. You can even write in Creole. Please make a contribution.

The newsletter is not a forum for your discontent with your job, the Peace Corps, your island, or whatever. If you have a problem, or are frustrated, please deal with it by talking to your supervisor, APCD, a counterpart, a friend, or a friendly rum shop owner.

SERIOUS TING Editors — Paul Ryneski, Dominica and Andy Montgomery, St. Lucia

Island Editors:

Antigua/ Barbuda/ Montserrat - Jonathan Pearce

Carriacou - Rob Davidson/ Linda Rogers

Dominica - Brad Whitaker

Grenada - Keith Bensen

St. Kitts - Diana Honebrink and Tim Sands

St. Lucia - Andy and Jenny Montgomery

St. Vincent - Jonathan Pearce

Please limit your submissions to around one type-written page, two hand written pages, or one to two columns, and mail early!

Submit all articles to your Island editor or **SERIOUS TING** c/o US Peace Corps, PO Box 357, Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica, WEST INDIES

Deadlines:

May 1992 Issue — March 30

July 1992 Issue — May 30

Corrections: Due to importing a Microsoft Word file into PageMaker the amounts for the "Key Lime Pie" recipe did not appear as fractions. Any ingredient showing a pair of numbers in parentheses following the letter f is a fraction with the first number being the numerator and the second number the denominator.

The article "Dominica Bed and Breakfast" should have been credited to Sue Fitch and Elaine Alexander.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

Peru - Welcomes You to Adventure by Rick Weinberg, Montserrat.....	3
A Terrifying At-Home Experience by John and Carole Grady, Antigua.....	4
Leave It by David Matheny, Antigua.....	4
Dominica Rap submitted by Brad Whitaker, Dominica.....	5
They're Everywhere by Brad Whitaker, Dominica.....	5
Update by Capt. Pips, Cmdr., A.P.C.A.....	5
Hey EC57ers- by Penny O'Brien, Dominica.....	6
A Dark and Stormy Dog by Korynn Underwood, Antigua.....	6
The TV Generation - Part I by Rob Davidson, Carriacou.....	7
Speed Is the Key by Jay Wasserman, Dominica.....	7
Gwan Tas by Paul Ryneski, Dominica.....	8
Education Column by Sue Fitch, Dominica.....	8
People of This Time by John and Dino Elefante.....	8
Dominica's Scoop by Brad Whitaker.....	9
St Kitts News and Gossip by Diana Honebrink and Tim Sands, St. Kitts.....	9
Venezuela by Lisa Satherwaite, Greada.....	10
West Indian Book Review by Rob Davidson and Lind Rogers, Carriacou.....	11
The Case for Helmets by Paul Ryneski, Dominica.....	11

Help Wanted:

The co-editors of **Serious Ting** are looking for somebody to take control of **Serious Ting** after the July issue. Send a note (resume not necessary) to Dominica if you're interested. Duties include collecting submissions, typing, printing, and distributing to the islands. The only requirement is that you are a volunteer who knows how to write, spell, photocopy, use the computer, and read. Knowledge of PageMaker is a bonus, but not necessary. No pay, but no costs (except your time and transport fare to wherever you decide to work on it). Looks good in the college alumni journal.

Peru - Welcomes You to Adventure by Rick Weinberg, Montserrat

[This is part one in a two-part series on Rick Weinberg's trip to Peru. Part two will appear in the next issue of Serious Ting.]

Peru is a land of many contrasts! The geography is among the most spectacular in the world; the landscape fluctuates from tropical rain forests, to the driest deserts, to some of the world's highest mountains in the Andes range, to the high plateau of the alti-plano.

Pre-Columbian and modern history is the story of a mixture of cultures that were both advanced and varied, yet also very tragic. A small percentage of the population controls the wealth and governs the country, while most people of Indian descent live in abject poverty without the basics of sanitation or health care. The government is almost paralyzed in their fight against terrorist groups attempting to overthrow them.

My first day in Lima, a bomb hit the main power plant, and knocked out the electricity. The power was off for twenty-four hours in a city of eight million people - I stayed in the hotel by candlelight. Welcome to Peru!

The terrorists control about half of Peru; this "red zone" is a huge central part of the country. I was advised by the U.S. Embassy not to attempt to travel to or visit the area. I took their advice, but what I did see of Peru, and later of Bolivia and Chile, was inspiring, enlightening, amazing, and mysterious.

After arriving in Lima, which was founded as Peru's Spanish colonial capital city in 1535 by the greedy conquistador Francisco Pizarro, I toured the famous Gold Museum. This museum has an exquisite private collection of gold art objects that survived the Spanish plunder; Inca gold masks, gold plates, jewelry, and textiles with gold and silver thread can all be seen and appreciated.

After only a day in Lima I traveled on to Iquitos, the gateway to the Amazon in northeast Peru. This is a jungle city founded on the wealth of the rubber trees. To get to Iquitos I flew Aero Peru; rebel activity prevents land or water travel. Ocean going vessels can travel all the way from the Atlantic Ocean to arrive here, about a 2000 mile trip up river!

Early the next day, I went on the Amazon River with Moises, a jungle explorer and guide. Moises is somewhat of a local legend; he is featured in the "South American Handbook" and operates "Amazon Jungle Expeditions." We went by large canoe fitted with an outboard motor to his base camp about 50 kilometers down the river. There I met Carlos, my expedition guide, who was to take me deep into the jungle for the next five days!

After lunch we left camp and hiked through the rain forest, thick with huge, tall trees and dense undergrowth. We arrived at Rio Colorado, a small tributary river. Carlos and I loaded our small dug-out canoe and

started paddling up river for a six hour journey to a jungle house. Paddling in the heat of the day I found the trip quiet and the river smooth.

After some time, we came to the junction of the Rio Negro. There were signs of life along the riverbanks; this is the jungle highway - the only way in or out of this area. We travelled slowly, careful not to tip the canoe because within the brown water beneath us were electric eels and piranha fish!

We saw thatched roof houses with open sides built on platforms, children fishing, and women washing clothes. Yet amidst this activity there was a feeling of peace and calm.

We arrived at the jungle house at dusk and stayed with a hospitable family that lived there. I had the chance to observe their way of life while they shyly eyed me too.

They rigged hammocks and mosquito nets over the beams in the house - that's how you sleep in the jungle. After a fresh fish and rice supper we all went to sleep. Nobody stays up very late in the jungle.

The next morning we began our hike at day break, trying to reach the Rio Manati, another Amazon tributary. There were five of us now: two Chilean students who left Iquitos for the Amazon the day before me, Carlos our guide, a camp cook from the jungle family and me.

The rain forest was dripping wet and dark as we walked, but there was no rain! When we got thirsty Carlos cut a certain kind of vine with his cutlass, and we drank pure, fresh water from the wood. He also showed us another type of palm tree with an edible inside for survival.

You could only hike for about four hours here; we were all very muddy, wet and tired. We set up camp and rested for awhile, then explored the area for birds, monkeys, and plant life.

Up to this point, my insect repellent had worked effectively and the swarming mosquitos had stayed away from me. But I was not about to take any chances; I continued to take my malaria pills even though the guides assured me that Malaria was only in Brazil, not in Peru. The mosquitos were many, and we were few! The mosquito nets could not keep them all out, and it was a long night.

The following morning we finally made it to the Rio Manati, deep in the forest. We stayed at the jungle house of some people who owned a small plantation. Life was slow; the weather was hot and humid. It takes a lot effort to do anything in that environment.

After awhile the men came into camp with an animal they had just killed on a hunt. I had never seen this kind of animal before or even heard its name, but it turned out to be our supper that night. They also had a homemade still and made alcohol out of sugar cane. We all had a drink! The sounds in the jungle at night are amazing. It was a natural symphony orchestra

performing nightly in the forest. We all rested well that night.

A good two days later we arrived back at the base camp, and we swam in the main Amazon River. It was heaven after the heat and mud of the jungle. Like the ocean, the jungle demands and gets your utmost respect!

The next day I went back to Iquitos and rejoined civilization. There I met Diego Castillo Tord, the owner of an Amazon Saw Mill, who was staying at the Hotel Caravel, as I was. He invited me on an inspection tour of the mill that day. We travelled for an hour on the Nanay River until we reached the mill site at the junction of the Amazon. Diego's foreman showed us their antique equipment: the old steam engines and great saws they keep working from the 1920's and 30's. We watched the logs come down river, where they were lifted, sawed, and the rough-cut lumber was stored. I saw the work the men had to do in order to earn about \$100 US for a month's work. When they complete their work, the finished wood is shipped by boat down the Amazon to the Atlantic and is finally sold in Mexico.

On another day, I explored Beleh, a shanty town near Iquitos. I have never seen worse living conditions in my travels to more than 35 countries around the world. There were open pit sewers, and garbage, and houses built next to and on top of filth. Babies and more babies were dressed in dirty rags. People were selling and cooking food amidst dogs, chickens, and dirt. I realized this was where disease comes from. Cholera has taken its toll and the people did not seem to notice or know how to change their lives!

The government, of course, does nothing for its people. Alan Garcia, the ex-president of Peru, is fighting allegations that he embezzled millions of dollars during his administration. Alberto Fujimori, the current president, and his government, is crippled by no money and terrorist activity. Inflation is very high and tourism is way down. Peru needs outside help from foreign development agencies such as the US Peace Corps and Britain's VSO, but because the government cannot guarantee the safety of the volunteers, they are not sent to this country.

A Terrifying At-Home Experience

by John and Carole Grady, Antigua

The first night we found a tarantula in our house, under my makeshift writing desk, it was a scare. Thanks to our friend I-Bidge, who happened to be visiting at the time, it was killed. The two or three times since then, we've let the fuzzy, four-inch spiders lie still - eventually they go away.

One night we had a bat in the house. It swooped and swerved through our open living-dining room, over, under, around and through the classic wooden Caribbean-style archway that spans the place. Amid shrieks, we finally persuaded it to leave with a wildly swinging broom.

Recently, we spotted a small size thing in the darkened hallway. "What's that?" We rose, alarmed. "A tarantula." Maybe. "A bat." Hide your hair. Taking a long stick, carefully we prodded it. Don't worry. "It's a Murray Mint wrapper!"

What a relief! We returned to our easy chairs and magazines.

Next time: The night the mouse woke me up chewing on my pinky.

Leave It.

by David Matheny, Antigua

I don't know what it's like on your island, but here in Antigua sea shells, coral and other items from the sea have been packed in various containers by some former volunteers and taken back to the U.S. at the end of service. I would like to think that during two years people have enjoyed the natural beauty of the Caribbean; what's the point in taking parts of Caribbean nature back to the U.S.?

Sea life souvenirs from the Caribbean put on display in the U.S. is both artificial and way out of place. The only place they belong is in the Caribbean. If you must take a souvenir back with you, I suggest taking pictures, memories and experiences of nature, you have no business taking nature from its birthplace. It's stealing.

So please, the next time you see a beautiful shell or coral don't pack it away, look at it, draw a picture of it, use your camera, and then put it back where you found it; thank you very much.

Dominica Rap

submitted by Brad Whitaker, Dominica

Written by a group of Dominicans at an environment workshop.

Chorus

Dominica, small, rugged and green
Forever an enchanting scene

There's no other place in the whole wide world
You can find a river for every day of the year
With crystal clear water pollution free
A feeling of paradise under a mangrove tree
The Rosalie, Sarri-Sarri, Layou, Zabico
Are among the many rivers I am sure you can go
(chorus)

Towering mountains as if in a dream
Over whose crowns our tropical sun beams
Thickly forested, lushly green
Vegetation, flowers wildly pristine
(chorus)

See the hot boiling lake
For whatever it takes
Tour the National Park - air
Unpolluted and clear
(chorus)

A cauldron of volcanic stew
Deep in the heart of a lovely view
Bubbling with increasing vigor
Wait! This thing is hot, you know
(chorus)

Preservation, conservation yes
Of all the isles of the Caribbean
Dominica out matches the rest
Just like the forest fauna
Native peoples handicraft
Conserved by the Kari fauna
(chorus)

If you love nature
Then you must be here
We love nature too
And have preserved it THAT'S TRUE
(chorus)

They're Everywhere

by Brad Whitaker, Dominica

Since our good friend Wanda Kendall visited Dominica, condoms have been popping up everywhere around the Peace Corps office. The other day I walked into the office and there, alone in the middle of the work table, was a single, unopened condom. Now, where else would you see condoms laying around? They're in our mail boxes, on the book shelf, in a "dispenser" beside the computer, and of coarse overflowing from the medical cabinet. For a while, there was a container of the "Fun Size" under the mail boxes! We have one mighty resourceful Volunteer that has found condoms make pretty good rubber bands (wipe them off first). Where Peace Corps lacks in the frequency of dental check-ups, they certainly tip the scales with the plethora of condoms.

Update

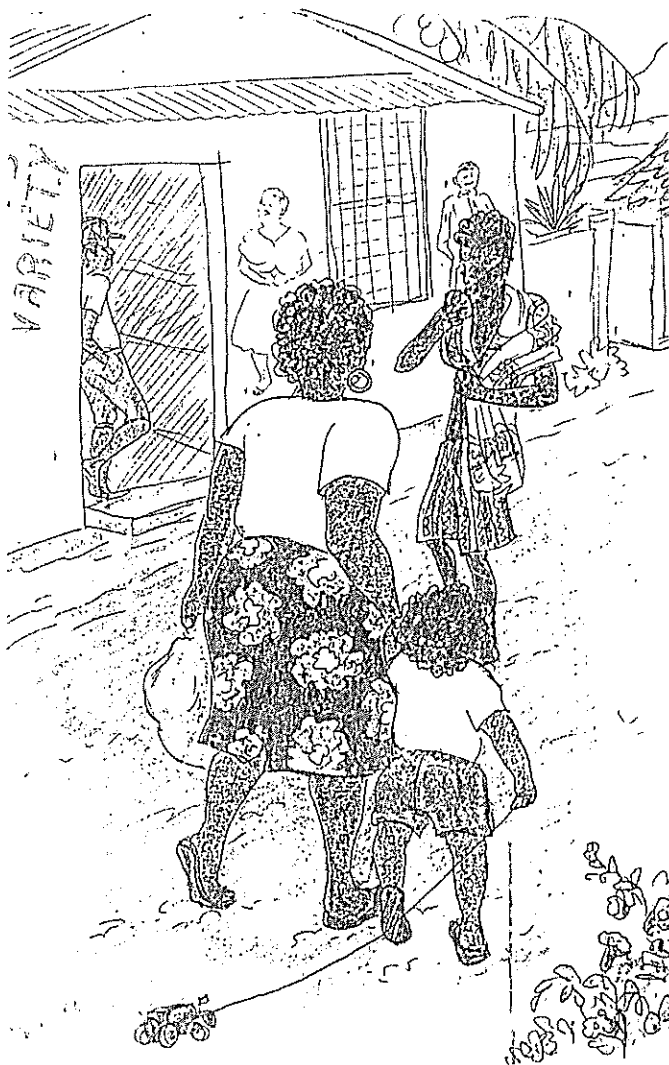
by Capt. Pips, Cmdr., A.P.C.A.

Recently the newly formed detachment of the Airborne Peace Corps Antigua distinguished themselves in their first action. Within 45 minutes of being called up, Lt C.B. Grady and company were aboard a LIAT C130 bound for the insurrection on Redondo.

Uniformed in their best pair of 2 year old jeans, tennis shoes, new bicycle helmets, and the latest M-17 Peace Shooters, they jumped into the heat of the conflict.

We commend the officers and troops of Airborne One for their bravery and efficiency under adverse conditions. In the best tradition of the Corps, the waring factions of mountain goats were quickly dispatched.

Goat water for everyone.



The main street in Calibishie. Drawing courtesy of Ellen Alexander, mother of Elaine Alexander, Dominica.

Hey EC57ers —

by Penny O'Brien, Dominica

Are you still telling people that you are on assignment and will be here for two years? Do you realize we have been here for six months already? We only have eighteen months left. Where did the time go?

I need help finding it. Up until Christmas I think I was subconsciously waiting for winter and cold weather. The weather wasn't changing, so neither were the seasons and neither was time. Now that Christmas has come and gone, I'm forced to admit that it is winter. I even covered up with a sheet the other night. And I've seen a few people in sweatshirts, so that should have given me a clue. Time keeps pushing us along.

If the work on my assignment hasn't kept me busy, just the challenge of learning the background and absorbing as much history as possible so I can better

A Dark And Stormy Dog

by Korynn Underwood, Antigua

As you may suspect, the following is a work of fiction, unlike my previous oeuvres. Actually, I don't even have any special feelings towards dogs, I just can't seem to stop writing about them. Must be part of my cultural adjustment.

Anyway, I would like to share with you, gentlest of readers (although I can't say I appreciate that death threat following publication of my last dog tale), a dream I had. Yes, I had a dream. A dream about a dog. A dog dream, if you will.

It was morning and I was walking (what else?) to work. I happened upon a little cottage along the path and my gaze was drawn to the small dog which was sleeping on its veranda. "What a cute dog!" I thought, "Can't even see any of its bones pressing through its skin!" As if on cue, the pup looked up at me. We made eye contact. I heard myself, to my horror, beckon to the animal, despite 6 months of conditioning in self-preservation. The dog got up and actually wagged its tail. "No apparent stumps!", I cried in disbelief. It even boasted a modest blue collar. Instinctively I clutched my jugular as the pup approached, but it only wanted to...yes!...lick my nose! Wow!...I quickly scanned his (yes, he was fixed!) coat for bald patches and parasites, but none could be found. Instead, a shiny and sleek coat danced before my (by now tear-filled) eyes. I reached down to stroke the pup and then...ah, you know the rest...I woke up.

understand the why's and the how's that things are done the way they are has kept me unaware of time. Something is always going on with the Volunteers on Dominica—a mountain climb, a party, Friday night cocktails, dinner for COSes, Sundays at Donkey Beach, and recently visits by PCVs from other islands using up their vacations. It's almost a relief to go back to work on Monday to rest up.

And as if social life among the volunteers were not enough, the neighbors in my village look for me at their christenings, funerals, birthdays and just breaking bread together. For me this is an important part of the PC experience. Probably that's why I'm here. I could get most of the other activities back in the States.

In physics I learned that there is an acceleration due to gravity. But for the life of me I can't remember learning about a natural acceleration due to the passage of time. Of course they did say expand your horizons when we volunteered for the Peace Corps. Maybe that's part of the expanding universe.

Tell us, EC 56 and others. Does the pace ever change? Do you have any helpful hints for us, so that next year when we are in your place we won't be saying, "if only..."

The TV Generation — Part I

by Rob Davidson, Carriacou

A character in a Douglas Coupland novel claims that most people only have two or three genuinely interesting moments in their lives, that the rest is just filler. This is the voice of the TV Generation speaking; any person born after 1960 or so was basically inundated by the cathode ray tube. Having watched how each episode on their TV shows neatly works to a climax and then a conclusion, they expect life to be the same. They look at their lives, pick out the two or three events that qualify for TV-level excitement, and resolve that the rest is "filler." And so they feel no compunction about working behind a bar for ten or twenty years, or being a secretary or an office slave — what difference does it make, anyway? Make your filler as easy as possible! There is no reason to over-extend!

I qualify, in terms of the date of my birth, for the TV Generation. People don't yet know what to call my "twentysomething" age group, but I think that "the TV Generation" is the best title. I, for one, watched a hell of a lot of it in my youth, under the guise of entertainment, education, and information-gathering. Now you can shop on TV, if you have a credit card. You might not have the slightest interest in the idea of going shopping, but how can you resist the 14k gold necklace you happened to glance at while zooming through your 99 cable channels? The price seems right...

Then you go out, wearing your new necklace (which was conveniently mailed to your door) to some sad office party where everybody talks about work, as if they had absolutely nothing else to talk about (perhaps they do not), and the woman from the cubicle next to yours exclaims, "Oh! What a gorgeous choker! Where did you get it?"

"TV," is all you have to say. That explains it all, and you have nothing to be ashamed of, because it is in front of the TV that you belong: you are a member of the TV Generation.

A small circle of office men are discussing an issue they first saw raised on the ABC Evening News. One said he saw the other side of the coin expressed on CNN. One fellow is lost, because he watches NBC.

It is time to eat. You sit down. The main course: chicken breast sauteed in white wine, garlic, and butter.

"My, but this is delicious," you say. "You must tell me where you got the recipe!"

Your hostess, who is sitting on your left, says, "This? Well, I got this from Jeff."

She means, of course, the Frugal Gourmet, a PBS series. It is then that you notice her bracelet — they were offered on the TV shopping channel last month, but at such a ridiculously low price you figured there was some sort of catch. But they seem to look nice on her, and, yes, the gold plating is certainly convincing. Maybe you should have...

Speed Is the Key

by Jay Wasserman, Dominica

I have never been a morning person. I need to get up as late as possible. As of late, I've been trying to streamline this process. First I started by preparing my next days lunch on the night before. This helped a bit but it wasn't enough. So I next attacked the time consuming task of shaving. It was just taking too long to shave in the morning. So that was easily solved. The beard is looking fine.

Next came the hair. Everyone has told me to keep my eyes open on how the locals approach problems. Well I noticed that the locals have come up with a solution of avoiding the time consuming problem of washing your hair every morning. The dreadlocks go well with the beard.

Then came the whole problem of washing in the morning, this needed to be addressed.

So I took a clue from October's *Serious Ting* article on laundry. Now I soak myself all night long. Of course there is a problem with pruning, but I can live with it.

Next I needed to speed up dressing in the morning. I needed something that I could sleep in and wear all day. So I went to my local tailor and had him make me a set of rubber suits. They look really sharp, and the soaking every night cleans them up. So I solved my problem with laundry in the same stroke.

Finally, I need my coffee in the morning to get going. But how could I speed this up? So I did a little experimenting and found that water boils off at the rate of about a gallon an hour. So I got myself a 7 gallon plus one cup pot and set it boiling before I go to sleep. So every morning I jump out of my "water" bed in my rubber suit, arrange my 'locks and beard, grab a cup of coffee and my lunch, and off I go.

Gwan Tas

by Paul Ryneski, Dominica

Jodi-a té ni un vyé fidji
Mwen pa té emmé'i
Poutji mwen kay viv ési?
Mwen ka vini

Mwen wivé
Mwen koumansé emmé'i
Laplas la an madi, vandwédi, samdi
Najé. Cabwits-la
Commawad-mwen Murphy hod leglis

Mwen pati
Commawad-mwen an legis-la
Apwemedi évé zanfan-lekol mwen
Gwo kay mwen bó tout bagay
I fini

Translation:

Portsmouth

The day was ugly
I didn't like it
Why am I going to be here?
I'm coming

I came
I began to like it
Market on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday
Swimming. The Cabrits
My friend Murphy from church

I'm leaving
My friends at church
Afternoons with my students
My big house near everything
It's over

Education Column

compiled by Susanne Fitch, Dominica

This Column is created by teachers, for teachers. The idea came out of the Education IST on Dominica. If you have any info that you think would be interesting or helpful, send your submissions to Susanne Fitch, c/o *Serious Ting*.

Student Information

The first day of school in the United States should be called "Index Card Day." By the last period the students roll their eyes and moan when the teacher takes out the packet of white 3"x 5" cards.

Here's a different idea. Instead of students completing an index card with a few lines of vital information, students took home a 8 1/2"x 11" sheet of paper and completed the biographical sheet. Of course it contained the usual age, parents' name, address and phone number (buried in the middle), but it also contained some of the following fill-in-the-blanks: I like to be called, the student in this class I would tell a secret to is, some prizes I would like my teacher to give me for being good are, The student in class with whom I'd like to work on a project is, The thing I like to do most in my spare time is, I have study hall during periods, The time of day I work best is, If I could ask my teacher one question it would be, When I grow up I want to be.

The completed sheet gives a picture of the students tastes, friends, and attitudes. After punching holes in the papers you can insert them into your roll book. Use the other side of the papers to document discipline matters or accomplishments. The Caribbean students may be confused because probably no one has given them index cards or asked such personal questions. The information will be interesting and helpful in planning lessons and motivating students.

People of This Time

by John and Dino Elefante

submitted by Brad Whitaker, Dominica

We are the people of this time, you and I,
We are the keepers of the rhyme and reason.
We are the people of this time, everyone,
We are believers in the right.

Every morning that I wake up to face another day,
another set of problems seem to come my way.
It would be so easy to let it all pass by, but another
generation can't get left behind.
If you are with me, I am with you now.

Chorus

We are the people of this time, you and I,
We are the keepers of the rhyme and reason.
We are the people of this time, everyone,
We are believers in the ride, here and now.

Everywhere I turn, another warning sign,
I think about the world that I will leave behind.
Come back, come back, this moment is calling, we
cannot be strangers anymore.
If you are with me, I am with you now.
(chorus)

We are the voice like an echo that cries cries, are You
near me, leaving behind this moment in time, do you
hear me
(chorus)

Dominica's Scoop

by Brad Whitaker, Dominica

The newness of this year has worn off and everyone seems to be busily working at doing their thing. Some events that stick out in my mind as I try to summarize the past two months are:

- The president had a real dandy of a reception at the state house to coincide with International Volunteer Day. Invited guests included PCVs, VSOs, UN Volunteers, and Dominicans involved in volunteer work. Most of us got a chance to chat with the president and all of us there enjoyed the great food.

- Chris McCoy started off this year with a humdinger of a party. You see, Chris' birthday is on Dec. 31 and sometimes gets lost in the new year celebrations. Well, Chris took care of that and hosted her own party. If you want it done right, do it yourself. The crowd was big and the sun came up before the parties went down. It was a PARTY!

- Christmas is a great time for families to visit, and they sure came this time. Peter's parents started the season with a one night stand in early December. Mary's parents stayed a little longer, rented a car, and delivered a computer to the Curriculum Unit. Penny's daughter and family stayed for a while, then it was Penny's son's turn to escape the cold. Ingrid's parents were here and Ingrid braved the lanes of Dominica in a rented car - we're talking guts to get behind the wheel. Both of Elaine's parents graced us for a short while. If someone yells "beke" at you as you're walking along the road, it's probably from Elaine as she's hanging out of the window of a rented car. Even Barb's mom made it down. Barb met her in St. Martin to make sure she made the last leg of the trip.

- Ambassador Hughes was here for a couple of days as found time to stop by the office to talk to those of us around. He said a lot of that politician stuff, and some of it was interesting. The councillor from the embassy came a little later that week. He likes to hike, so a group got together and went up to Fresh Water Lake. Some went on to Boeri Lake.

- It's good to have Doris and Evalyn back on island with us after their short visit to the states. Were still counting on Tracy being back here around the end of February, trusting that her recovery is speedy and complete. It will feel good having the whole group back together again.

- Dominica found out last week that there are 100 bags of mail stagnant in Antigua! 16 of the bags contain mail from 1990, and 2 of the bags contain registered mail (These were found in the trash!) So I guess that's where the black hole in the mail system is. Dominica has sent a mail officer to Antigua to help get the system under control and keep it that way. We should be receiving some LONG awaited mail just now. So! You think you're mail takes a long time to get to you. Wi Garcon!

- Nature Island Express, the puddle jumping service based out of Canefield Airport, suffered a major setback when one of its few planes exploded above Donkey Beach. The deceased pilot and co-pilot were pulled from the wreckage as it lay on the floor of the sea. No passengers were on board. Nature Island Express is now down to one airplane, and it is grounded.

- "K.O. Derf!" (Trivia : What U.S. movie is this line from?)

St. Kitts News and Gossip

by Diana Honebrink and Tim Sands, St. Kitts

The biggest news story in St. Kitts in "recent" days was definitely Carnival which officially ran from December 24th to January 2nd. Christmas Day proved to be the only respite during a rather unique time of celebration. Betty and Rollie Hurlbut (EC56) hosted a wonderful party which helped to alleviate any feelings of homesickness that were surfacing that day, and as a matter of fact alleviated any feelings of hunger as well.

Those volunteers who reside in our capital city of Basseterre received their Carnival wake-up call at 2:00 am on Jouvert Morning (December 26th) when the sounds of Carnival took to the streets and Kitticians and non-Kitticians alike began a week of street jamming, jumping up, drinking and having a good time. The culmination of the festivities was Carnival Day (January 1st). This is the day of the Carnival Parade in which troupes in various costumes and various states of intoxication make their way through the streets of Basseterre. Our own Jim Welsh (EC55) was in just such a troupe sporting a costume that one PCV described as a "dancing street fowl" or was that foul? At any rate, congratulations to Jim for immersing himself in the local culture. The Carnival was put to rest on Las Lap (January 2nd) with a repeat of the Carnival Parade and one last opportunity to jump up. Finally on January 3rd residents of Basseterre were able to get a good night's sleep.

The New Year brought with it a new APCD for St. Kitts/Nevis. Mr. Alphonso Bridgewater was welcomed to the Peace Corps fold at an informal party graciously hosted by Tim Sands (EC57) on January 7th. This gathering also served as a farewell party for our former APCD Thomas Williams. Now, before anyone accuses the St. Kitts/Nevis volunteers of being somewhat tacky and utterly cheap please be aware of the fact that we did have a separate farewell party for Mr. Williams in December, however, there was a slight flaw . . . the guest of honor was unable to attend. The volunteers had gathered for a good-bye, potluck at the home of Paul Rosenfeld (EC57), who incidentally had prepared an exquisite personalized cake for the event, only to find out that Mr. Williams and his traveling companion, Dr. Pyle, were stuck in Anguilla due to bad weather! Yet another Peace Corps tribute to flexibility.

Things have settled down considerably since the holidays. The teachers are back at school. Nancy Blackstock and Jim Welsh are awaiting their COS conference. Tim Sands and Tom Honebrink are looking forward to traveling to Dominica for their IST. Amy Rankin and Hui Cha Le (both EC57) are busy trying to set up a ceramics program for CXC. They were last seen hunting for suitable clay along a very busy tourist beach . . . they've assured us that they were simply following a lead given to them by local friends of the arts. And we've assured them that we'll be accompanying them on the next clay finding mission, towel in hand!

Venezuela

by Lisa Satterwaite, Grenada

For anyone travelling to Venezuela in the near future, here is some information about the 2 week trip my husband and I made in October 91.

The exchange rate was 60 Bolivars(Bs) to the US dollar. It was easy to change money at the Caracas airport and I would recommend doing that. You can also buy a ticket there for the taxi ride to your destination; this will ensure that you are not overcharged. The cost of the ride from the airport to our hotel was \$600 Bs

In Caracas we stayed at the Hotel Savoy. It was \$1625 Bs per night for a double. Very small room, but clean, with cable TV, hot water, and a desk clerk who spoke English. The Savoy is walking distance from the Sabana Grande (a long promenade-type shopping area with a million stores, vendors and sidewalk cafes) and a Metro stop. The Metro (subway) is great! For \$6-9 Bs you can go all over the place in air-conditioned comfort.

There are many big-city things to do in Caracas. We went to 2 art museums, the Theresa Carreno Cultural Center, where there are symphony concerts, ballets, etc (all near the Hilton; Belles Artes metro stop), and movies (there are movie theaters all over the place). There is a lovely, 200 acre city park (Parque Este) that has shady, winding pathways and a couple of small lakes (complete with herons and flamingos) in it. A good place to picnic, go for a run, or just sit and relax.

There are so many restaurants it's mind-boggling. There was a very good place right around the corner from the Savoy called El Caserio (Av. Las Delicias) - a popular "taverna" - bar and restaurant - where we had delicious fish dishes and watched people. Another great restaurant was called El Porton - in the El Rosal area. We lunched on black beans and rice, spiced shredded beef, guacamole, and the cheese and arepas (warm cornmeal "biscuits") that are the traditional accompaniment to meals. We spent as little as US \$10 and as much as \$35 on complete meals for two at various places around Caracas. There are lots of street vendors selling food that is very cheap - a "hamburguesa" - a common street-food item, costs Bs 50 - 75, and is huge. On every street there are stands/restaurants that make "batidos" (fruit smoothies) and serve fresh fruit plates - all very affordable. Then there are the ice creams, pastries, cappuccinos....!!! You get the picture.

The weather in October was spring-like. Nice and warm during the day, cool enough for a light "wrap" at night if you wanted it. We found it very comfortable.

We speak almost no Spanish, but took a phrase book and dictionary, and got along pretty well, although the more you know, the better time you'll have of it. People were generally very willing to try and figure out what we were talking about, and were helpful, especially if we made a stab at trying to say it in Spanish.

We took an "express" bus to Merida. It was very cheap (600 Bs one way), but LONG (13 hours), with several stops for fill-ups where you could get a snack and use a bathroom. It's an overnight trip (9 p.m. to 10 a.m.), but sleep was almost impossible because of the uncomfortable positions, the stops, and the exhaust fumes. We got to Merida feeling

gritty, stiff and tired. It was a bit much for us, and we decided we would fly back to Caracas from Merida on the way home (a 1 hour flight - about US \$50). At the time we visited, the airport in Merida was closed for renovation, and we wondered if it would be a problem getting back and forth from the nearest airport (in El Vigia), but it wasn't. There are taxis, buses, and rental cars available. The Merida airport was supposed to be reopening in December.

Merida is a smallish university town in the Andes (5,000 feet). A big attraction is the cablecar, which ascends about 11,000 feet into the mountains (it's the longest and highest in the world). At the third stop, there is a trail you can hike around on, and also you can look into going with a mule train about 8 miles "in" to a tiny village where there is lodging, and then hiking back out again the next day. We just hiked around for a couple of hours, but would have enjoyed going all the way to the village if we'd known about it and planned ahead (talk to a travel agent or guide there, or ask at the entrance to the cablecar if you're interested).

We met a fellow who works at the tourist information counter at the bus station (Leonel - you could call him there) and he acted as our guide one afternoon. That turned out to be a great idea - he showed us around the city on foot and on the buses giving practical hints on shopping and getting things done as well as historical and cultural information. Not to be missed is the Central Market (foods, leather goods, pottery, woven rugs/wall hangings, shoes, backpacks, ETC. ETC., all under one roof), and there are other interesting sights, and many nice parks as well. We found that it was easier to shop for clothes and things here than in Caracas - there are lots of stores near the central plaza.

We stayed at the Hotel Mintoy - it is new, clean and near the entrance to the cablecar, with good-sized rooms and friendly staff. It's located about 5 blocks from downtown Merida, and is quiet. Cost for a double there was \$1260 Bs per night. The temperatures, again, were spring like, with the days being comfortably warm and the evenings quite cool.

We rented a car and drove a couple of hours to Los Frailes - a monastery-style inn that is situated near the Sierra Nevada National Park. The inn has a lodge-type restaurant and recreation room (both with fireplaces), heated rooms, and was very pleasant, with a stream running by, and the fog rolling in over the mountains. The national park was a good place to hike, with several lakes, and interesting high-altitude vegetation. The small towns between Merida and Los Frailes were nice to look at, and any small restaurant we stopped at seemed to have delicious trout (there is a big trout hatchery in Santo Domingo - the town just past Los Frailes) and hot chocolate for CHEAP. Los Frailes cost about US \$30 -35 per night for a double.

Those are some highlights of our trip. We travelled around in one small corner of a huge country where you can visit metropolitan centers, beaches, the mountains, the Amazon, or the plains. You can't do it all but you could have a good time trying!

West Indian Book Review

by Rob Davidson and Linda Rogers, Carriacou

From the sprawling cornucopia of contemporary West Indian literature, we've selected a few titles and given them a simple rating. This is done in the hopes that you'd go out and read some of them for yourselves! Bon appetit!

Ratings: 1 - excellent, 2 - good, 3 - so-so, 4 - poor, x - haven't read.

Beka Lamb by Zee Edgell (female, Belize)

This novel is centered around the maturation of a Beka Lamb, a secondary school student in Belize, and deals with a young woman's coming-of-age and all the attendant horrors.

Linda - 1, Rob -2

Lucy by Jamaica Kincaid (female, Antigua)

This power-packed mini-novel takes the reader to the bustling metropolis of New York City, albeit through the bewildered and dazzled, dewy eyes of Lucy, a young West Indian. Rich with sensual imagery and a terse prose style, this one is destined for the "classics" rack at your local West Indian bookstore

Linda -1, Rob -1

A Small Place by Jamaica Kincaid

Banned by the Bird government, this scathing examination leaves the reader with a question mark in the brain and a sour taste on the palate. The subject? Tourism and the costs of "development", along with a political corruption and so on. A short but extremely powerful text.

Linda - 2, Rob - 1

The Wine of Astonishment by Earl Lovelace (male, Trinidad)

Based around the Spiritual Baptist faith and its troubled history, this novel moves on to the larger issues of the individual's responsibility in society, the role of the hero, and love. The narrative is written in

the West Indian English, and is well done.

Linda- x, Rob - 1

Miguel Street by VS Naipaul (male, Trinidad)

A colorful collection of short stories centered around the theme of growing up in Trinidad.

Linda - 2, Rob - 2

A House for Mr. Biswas by VS Naipaul

Humorous pathos pervade this novel of the life of Mr. Biswas, a clumsy pseudo-journalist making his way through a career and dreams of building a house in Trinidad. Plenty chickens in this story.

Linda - 1, Rob - x

Jump-Up-And-Kiss-Me/A Grenadian Childhood by Nellie Payne and Jean Bufong (females, Grenada)

Two novellas of youth in Grenada provide startling contrast and razor sharp insight into just what it is to be a kid in the West Indies.

Linda -2, Rob - 3

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys (female, Dominica)

A disturbed, haunting vision of post-emancipation Dominica and the interrelationships of West Indians. A short but tumultuous read, guaranteed to leave you feeling something.

Linda - 1, Rob - 1

Summer Lightning by Olive Senior (female, Jamaica)

Occasionally bright, most often sluggard and uninspiring, this collection of short stories can give you a sense of the language and a few emotional hairpin turns, but not much fat to chew on, if you dig.

Linda - 3, Rob - 3

Ti-Jean & His Brothers by Derek Walcott (male, St. Lucia)

This is a raucous, hallucinatory play about the Devil and his dealings with three young men. A comical, short look at what motivates people and how we relate with one another.

Linda - 1, Rob - 2

The Case for Helmets

by Paul Ryneski, Dominica

I requested a Peace Corps bike. I also got a helmet.

It took some courage to ride through town hearing the laughs at my expense.

Riding through the villages to the other side of the island gave me time to think of some of the benefits of helmets.

1. They protect you from falling coconuts.
2. You can claim the helmet kept you from hearing the guy on the side of the road shouting, "Give me your bike when you leave."
3. They prevent mud from getting in your hair as you ride after or during the rain.
4. Your hair doesn't look like it exploded after riding, although it may be flatter than you like.

