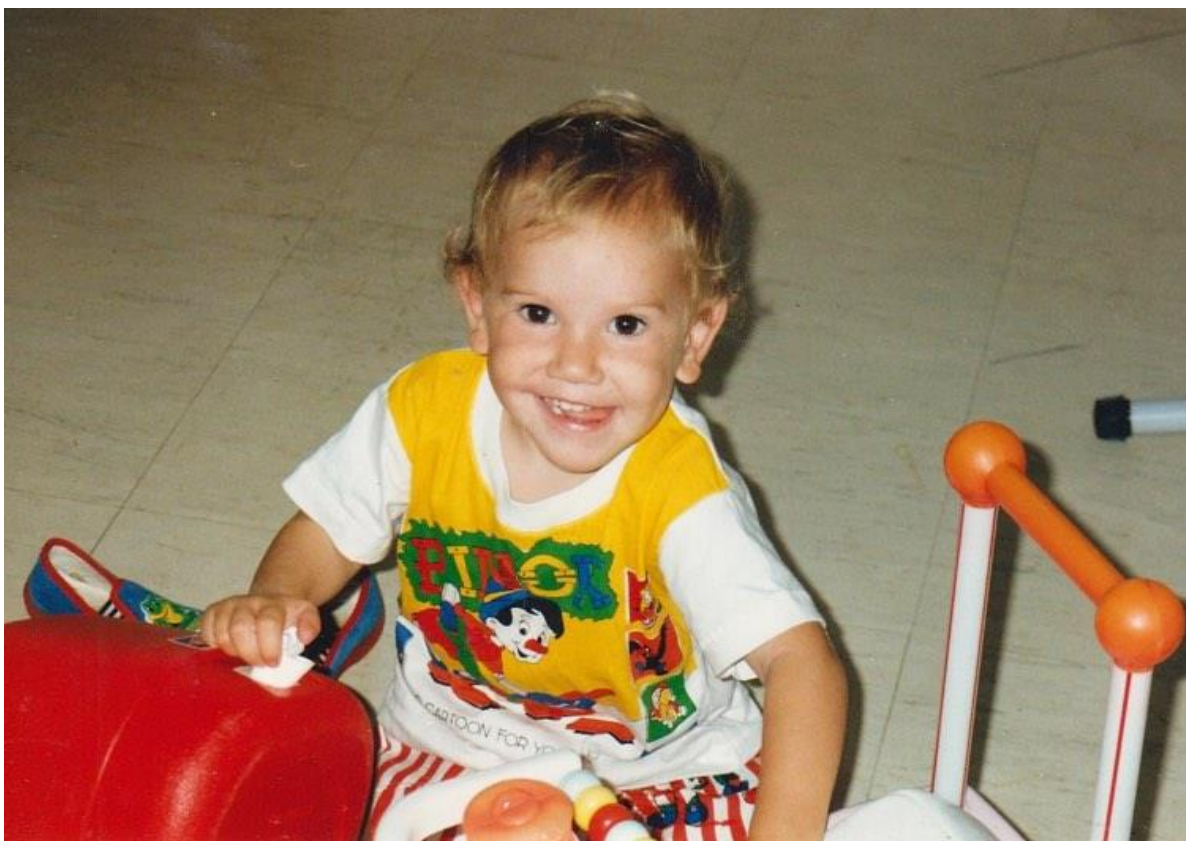


Port Vila  
Vanuatu  
SW Pacific  
November 1991

Firstly, an apology that we haven't written sooner, because of the many things that have happened, including Matthew's birth. Secondly, another apology that you are receiving a letter which is, to some extent, mass-produced. But nobody who is twelve thousand miles away from home can hope to write as much as they would like.

David is growing up fast, is very talkative and active. He adores Matthew and seems to be very concerned every time his brother cries. He is now very cheerful again after being a bit itchy for a while when he fell victim to the recent epidemic of chickenpox. Just after Matthew was born, David celebrated his second birthday. He had lots of presents and a party to which about eight of his friends came. He had a cake decorated with a train and carriages and, of course, two candles. Every time he sees a candle now, he says *party* and *blow*. David continues to be interested in planes, as does his father, so we take regular trips to the airport to see the planes, or, more often, plane. This is now more exciting than it used to be, however, as a new terminal has just opened there. For those of you who are wondering what David looks like these days, see the enclosed photograph. You may notice that he has had his first haircut, if you look closely. He seems a real little boy now.



As most of you will know, Matthew Thomas was born in the morning of Saturday, 22 June, 1991, at Port Vila Central Hospital, weighing 4.32 kilograms, which for those of you unversed in the metric system (and this includes us) is 9 pounds 11

ounces. Compared with David's birth, it was all fairly quick and straightforward, but already seems a long time ago. By now, Matthew is four months old and delightful. He sleeps at night, most of the time, and by day is cheeky and playful. He has a charming smile, as you can see from the enclosed photograph, He can sit up by himself now, though in a somewhat wobbly manner. He loves to pull hair, skin, clothes, anything within reach and has recently had his first tastes of solid food.



In August, Viv's parents came to visit us. They arrived here on 1st August and stayed for thirteen days. The weather was mixed during their stay, but they still found it very hot during the day. It was lovely to see them and they were delighted to be able to spend some time with their grandchildren. They also enjoyed a day trip round the whole of the island, seeing some of the sights we like here. Among other things, they saw some of the offshore islands, stopped at our beautiful beaches, marvelled at the quality of the roads, and studied the outrigger canoes which are still used by the islanders. All our visitors will be invited to take this journey. Round Port Vila, they came to terms with the vagaries of the bus services in town and got acquainted with all the cafés. The time they were here passed quickly but Viv's mum wasn't sorry to spend so little time with the resident insect life.

More recently, Clare Harvey, a university friend of Viv's, came to visit us. She stayed for almost a month, and as well as all the above visited Tanna with Ian. Tanna is an island to the south of us which is famous for its active volcano Yasur. The following week we all travelled to Santo, an island north of Port Vila. On Santo, we visited Vanafo, a village of local political significance, Champagne Beach, a famous beauty spot, the natural fresh water Blue Hole and the so-called Million Dollar Point, where the U.S. Army dumped huge amounts of war surplus into the sea at the end of World War II.

Ian's work continues much as before. The government changed to a new main computer at the start of the year, and this meant that he was involved in lots of work changing from the old to the new. All that is complete now, so he is involved in day-to-day running of the system and the writing of some new programs.

Every Monday, Ian still goes out running with Port Vila Hash House Harriers, a group dedicated to running first and drinking afterwards. He has now been there over fifty times, which means that he has been awarded a pewter tankard for his pains. He has just come to the end of a year taking turns in producing their weekly newsletter, and by way of thanks has been reappointed to the same task for the next year, for which he is not entirely grateful. During our first year in Port Vila, Ian lost a stone in weight, probably assisted by hashing, but unfortunately he put it all back when we were on leave. However, the weight is coming off again this year.

Just before the end of July, Viv suffered a road accident on one of the gravel roads outside town, and skidded off the road hitting a tree. She was in hospital for two days, suffering severe bruising and requiring stitches to her forehead and right knee. Remarkably, nothing was broken and both children were completely unscathed. Viv will have some marks on her for life, but has otherwise recovered completely. The red Toyota Starlet, our newly purchased second car, however, was a complete write-off, so we are back to one car again.

On Sundays, we still go to the Family Worship Centre. Our pastor Frank is shortly to leave us for a year. Viv is still involved in helping with the music and is also on the church committee. Ian, on the other hand, has just agreed to start producing the church newsletter.

It's been a very interesting couple of months here politically. By the time this reaches you it may have made it to the small print in your newspapers, but it goes like this: Some members of the party which has been ruling Vanuatu since independence in 1980 called a special congress at which they elected a new president of the party, Donald Kalpokas, replacing the Prime Minister. Walter Lini. Lini did not resign as P.M. but instead questioned the legality of the Mele conference in the courts, and after a sequence of events a special session of Parliament was called, firstly to elect a new speaker and then to call a vote of no confidence in the P.M. The P.M.'s response to this was to question the legality of the Parliamentary session.

On Tuesday 3rd September, the special session was called to order, but as Lini's group had boycotted the session, it was inquorate. On Friday 6th September, the quorum was reduced to a level where Lini could not stop it, so all the members were present. A lively vote of no confidence motion was read out, debated and carried by a show of hands by 24 votes to 21. It was then necessary to elect a new P.M. and not surprisingly the two candidates were Kalpokas and Lini. In a secret ballot, Kalpokas scored 25, against Lini's 20.

So Vanuatu has a new P.M. but what the future holds obviously remains to be seen. A general election will take place here on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, but nobody really has any idea who is likely to win.

Please feel free to write with all your news - all letters are very welcome indeed, as are visitors. Anyway, I must go now, for a cup of coffee awaits (how's that for a circular).

all our love,

Ian, Viv, David, Matthew