

Eleuthera, Rock Sound, March 6—The First Day



Figure 1 Paul and Lynn at the Nassau Airport

This is picture perfect. I am sitting here at 7 AM, among the palms and azaleas, probably 50 feet from the ocean. There's a breeze, and maybe I'll get a jacket. The coffee's ok, and I've had a breakfast bar filled with protein. I even took my vitamins. It's a perfect beginning for a month of learning about myself, and reinstating the simplest of self disciplines, which I've neglected for a long time, in the excuse that I'm too busy, and other parts of life are too important.



Figure 2 View from my cottage door

Here, on The First Day, it's more simple. My cottage is small, made of stone with a couple of colored glass window inserts. I have some appliances and a tv, a good bed, electricity. I brought with me some of my life: a whistle, some music, a computer, and plenty of books. But my intention here is to focus—focus on the simple everyday joys which, when taken slowly, are treasures which can never be replenished.

And I intend to write things down. My life sometimes seems forgotten—memories that have vanished, sensations which have left my skin and my heart, a treasure chest I've buried and forgotten like a neglectful pirate. I know I won't recover them, but I am determined to map this month of discovery, and keep it fresh with me for the rest of my days.

March 7—The Second Day

Here are the adventures on a small island:

1. Going to the grocery store. This is a big one—even though the trip is not far away by miles, it's as if we were going on a week's expedition. We make lists, discuss what we need and what we want (you make some tradeoffs with the latter), how much gas we have. The grocery itself is limited, by American standards, and since it's Tuesday, the shelves are partially empty and stock is low. The grocery boat comes to the island on Wednesday, and that's the day you can find almost everything, but at a very high price. Crackers, for instance, were almost \$4 a box. We bought sparingly, agonizing over our decisions.
2. Finding food. Lots of folks here on the island cook a few things in their homes at certain hours on certain days. The fun of living here is knowing this. Yesterday we stopped at one house and bought lunch: ribs, slaw, fried conch, and rice with peas. At the same time, we ordered dessert for dinner (the daughter of the cook got the order wrong, but she's baking the coconut cake later on in the week). Then Paul went out in the afternoon, because the lady who bakes bread and rolls (about 15 miles north of here) usually has her wares out of the oven at 2 PM. She only bakes on Tuesday, and it's the second house passed the second intersection in her town—there's no sign. Paul came back with two loaves of bread (still warm), cinnamon rolls, and sweet dinner rolls which were outstanding!

Paul also came back with two onions and two tomatoes, greens, and three potatoes, grown locally. These are precious, of course, and come from a produce stand somewhere along the road.

3. Eating. Because buying food is such a production, eating it is ritual of high importance. Paul is disappointed because there aren't quick little takeout places, but the absence of convenience food means that we sit down and dine together with fellowship and intensity. I don't miss lunch at my desk and other habits of the office.
4. Internal exploration. Not only did we spend yesterday exploring some of the miniscule treasures of the island, I personally became aware of the internal housecleaning that's going on inside me. It's a matter of paying attention to oneself in more minute detail than I do back in the real world: there are no deadlines here, and no distractions. I am aware of how often I want to create a deadline, just to have a motivation—I've GOT to see about my plane reservations for the return trip! I've only got 29 empty days to take care of that detail. Lynn is especially good at this: her energies are capacious and enthusiastic..
5. Talking. In my back home world, talking is usually a matter of instruction—meet me at seven, bring me the papers, let's do lunch next Wednesday. Here, conversation is a way passing time. Time is long, and filled with ideas rather than action. Conversation is the way to measure those ideas as they wander through my increasingly uncluttered landscape.

Today, we have an early breakfast of yesterday's sweet rolls, coffee, and conversation. Later, we are off to the library for computer time, and to the beach for snorkeling. And I'm sure there will be a food hunt....

Eleuthera, March 8, The Third Day

Living without the internet.

I can't believe that there are places in the world without internet access. In fact, I suspect Eleuthera has plenty of it—it's just that so far I haven't found it. My cottage has a phone, with a wire loosely strung to the cottage next door, and I found a computer cable—so somebody has had access in days past. The irony here is we don't know how, and we don't even know our own phone number here at the cottages, let alone a carrier and a password to get on. So, we are without internet.

Yesterday, we went to the library in Governor's Harbor, which has internet access and wireless connections as well. The problem is, it's a LIBRARY. It would not permit me to access my email on my office website, nor would the wireless work due to the firewall, apparently. Problem was, there was no knowledgeable person present, only 'librarians' to take my money. But the world is safe from pornography, I guess, because the library is protecting us from ourselves.



Figure 3 Library at Governor's Harbor

So, ok. I give up. And were it not that nobody can contact me, because I don't know my own phone number, I wouldn't worry about it. In fact, I surprise myself because I am NOT worried about it. My family, my office, my domestic arrangements are so far away and so irrelevant to the sound of rain on the roof and the feel of sand collecting in between my fingers...I don't even care. I wonder about my loyalty to the world.

Yesterday's adventures did indeed involve food—a lovely gourmet deli with fresh baked bread and shaved Italian ham and cheese sandwiches, and real sparkling water. And then, after a few hours on the beach, a trek home past the barbequed rib stand and a stop at Barbie's Bakery for 'pink' cake (which was home made and quite dense and rich, probably filled with eggs and trans fats). We had these treasures for dinner along with

conch salad (at \$8 a bowl)—the salad is made along the road just down from us and has plenty of peppers, onions, and fresh conch meat. It's quite spicy and good for the body as well. It could quickly become my new food addiction!



Figure 4 Lunch at the deli

I met Miss Alice. She's a very dark, rangy woman, with a beautiful accent and wonderful English grammar and diction, Miss Alice cleans for the owners of this compound and keeps things in order. We do our own cleaning in our cottages, but Miss Alice did rake our 'lawn' yesterday—'lawn' being the word for the magnolia-like bushes and sand that constitute the barrier between my cottage and the ocean. Our sand has methodical furrows left by the rake: I think we are supposed to stick to the paved walkways and keep the sand out of our shoes.

It rained last night. The sound of it awakened me at 5 am: it was a hard downpour which sounded lovely against the stones and glass of the cottage. Now, at 8:15 AM, the sun is up and while it's still a little overcast, the air is heavy with humidity and the onshore breeze we've had for the last two days has died at last. I think this will be a hot day and I am already feeling languorous and sweaty. Lynn wants another outing—I hope she doesn't feel she has to keep ME entertained. Today would be a good beach-in-front-of-the-cottage day, but I think that now, and I will embrace whatever adventure the day holds as it wears on.

March 9, Friday, The fourth Day

Thursday was rainy and damp, a good day for staying inside, reading, and taking a nap. I did those things, and I got some practicing done as well. It felt good: I love rainy days at home and I enjoyed them on Eleuthera as well. I am reading Martha Beck's "The Four Day Win", a couple of mysteries, and a book on the Bahamas.

Our adventure was cyber-sleuthing. After our abortive trip to the library to get internet access, we went on another adventure, this time to our landlord's old house where he leaves his computer. We didn't get a connection, but we found a password and then we came back and set up access on our own computers. Lynn and I both got on, and I was able to read my mail and find out that the septic guy had come, the dogs were ok, the cat was fine, and my staff was meeting this morning with the headhunter who is finding my

replacement. I felt a huge wash of relief, and I don't really care about whether or not I have continuous access.

Which is a good thing, because I haven't been able to get on the computer since. Not sure why, and I know I will have to solve this nagging mystery, but I will do it later. At least I know things are ok at home, and I don't feel a need to answer the business mail and initiate some kind of action which proclaims my availability to the world. I'll figure out the mystery of non-connection at a later time.

We ate at an interesting restaurant in Rock Sound called Sammy's...very good size, clean, and looking like a thriving business. Like all Eleuthera businesses, it was more like a cottage industry—located on a small, wandering road populated by abandoned buildings and minute family dwellings. The menu was just what I've come to expect in Eleuthera: ribs, fried chicken, fried fish, macaroni and cheese, rice and peas, and frozen vegetables. But there were real plates and glasses, bottled water, and good napkins. There was one other table of diners, and of course, probably only one cook in the kitchen. Dining was leisurely, to say the least. A small but loud group of young Bahamians was clustered around the bar in the other room, flirting with the bartender, drinking and smoking. I had a fried fish platter...very good, and probably filled with trans fat.

Then we came back to the cottage and had pieces of the coconut cake Paul had purchased from the 'take-away' up the street. Very yummy, and surrounded by good conversation with Paul and Lynn.

Today is sunny in the morning, with less wave action and onshore wind. I am sure we'll do a beach project...maybe taking some lunch and going to the southernmost part of the island. At least, that was the plan for yesterday, which was held off because of the weather.

March 10, Saturday, the sixth day

Yesterday was another beautiful, clear, windy day. We went to yet another beach, this one near Kinky's, where you turn left and head down a paved road. The public access road to the beach is a two track, junk littered, to a gorgeous sand beach with some houses on it, all of which look un-occupied. The beach is littered with drying seaweed, but otherwise fairly clear. We have brought sandwiches, and Lynn has cracked a coconut, and we feast in the sunshine. There are some clouds, but we manage to get pretty browned anyway. Lynn and Paul walk the beach, and I do for a little bit, but there's very little in the way of shells or other tidal leavings, and it's just acres and acres of clear beach and blue water.

Our food excursions consist of more ribs and conch and grouper, and the dinner is quite elaborate, really. Nothing fancy, but piles of it—food cooked by Barbie down the street. We talk about leadership and organizational skills and how the world might function better if people had an understanding of these things. I am feeling a little homesick., I guess—I've read the emails about the search committee, and I am quite upset about the

way some of the association leaders are behaving in this job search project. But what I recognize is my own internal battle with letting go of it: I must leave the mistakes and the management up to others at this point, and I am here on this island to learn how to do that. It's the first step in my 'divorce' from the last 29 years of my life.

So I return to today. I think we are going early (as early as Paul can get moving, that is) to go beaching and finding chocolate croissants. Interesting, how these small things can become the focus of a day, how easy it is to make mountains out of a croissant.

March 11, Sunday, The Seventh Day

Yesterday was a failure in the world of croissants. We arrived at the Pineapple Plantation a little too late, and the delectables were all gone. Apparently there are more tourists here than I think, because croissants clearly aren't native food.

We spend some time trying to change airline reservations—I wanted to come back a day early with Lynn, but I ended up in a travel agent's office who, in between bouts of cracking gum and picking her nose, informed me that my Frequent Flyer ticket couldn't be changed. To make matters more humiliating, she charged me \$10 for an 'international phone call', money which I suspect went directly into her pocket.

We went to a beautiful beach, Twin Cove Beach, on the Atlantic side. It was a little windy, so we didn't snorkel, but I did swim. The coves are created by a narrow spit of land and the water is a rich turquoise, clear and sheltered. The Atlantic breaks further out, probably along a line of coral reefs. This beach was really crowded! At least 6 people visited it during the two hours we were there.



Figure 5 Twin Cove Beach

On the way to the beach we stopped in Governor's Harbor at some shops and also at a small restaurant where I had a wonderful hamburger, my first beef in a week. It was cooked just right and the slaw, which is served everywhere, was quite good. We sat on a beautiful, tree-covered deck and watched the action: a glorious rooster who paraded up and down the street, loudly announcing his supremacy.

The evening morphed into another food and water foray, and since tomorrow is Sunday and Lynn says there will be nothing open for most of the day, we also bought staples for the next few meals.

Lynn and I are getting quite brown, even though we've not sunned more than a couple of hours a day. Paul prefers to lie in the shade, but he has that wonderful oil-laden skin which turns brown anyway, so we all look quite healthy. I am not thinking about what this sun does to my skin—the feel of warmth on my skin and the light everywhere is quite enough reward to chase away the fears.



Figure 6 Lynn at Twin Cove