

## Betsy and Winston Cochrane

### Hurricane Ivan

#### Grenada

September 3-9, 2004

I want to record for our children and grandchildren our experience with catastrophe in 2004. Winston and I had started planning a dream vacation early in the year. He had quite a few frequent flyer miles built up with Delta airline, so he told me to pick any vacation spot I wanted. We had been to the Caribbean (St. Thomas) about twenty years ago, and we loved it. So we bought several guides and I (Betsy) started looking at all the islands. Grenada attracted me because it has one absolutely beautiful beach (Grand Anse), rated as one of the best in the Caribbean islands by Fodor's guide. And we could get a resort right on the beach. We picked the Spice Island Beach Resort. It was beautiful, all-inclusive, with a great restaurant, and whirlpool suites five feet above sea level. Oceanfront...a few steps from the beach. Paradise!

Winston booked our flights, with some difficulty. In order to use the frequent flier miles, we had to fly from Cincinnati to Newark, stay overnight, fly out early the next morning to Barbados, and get a connecting flight to Grenada. Several days after arranging the complete itinerary, the airline called to say the flight to Barbados wasn't going to operate that day, and we had to reschedule the entire trip for a few days earlier. The irony of this change is that if we had kept the original schedule, Ivan would have hit Grenada before we left home.

We flew to Newark the first day, Friday, September 3. Our daughter, Liz, and her husband, Rob Uibelhoer, drove to our hotel there and had dinner with us. The next morning we tackled the Newark airport and got through the increased security due to the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and an airplane in Pennsylvania. We finally boarded our plane for Barbados. It was a seven-hour flight on Continental airlines. Perhaps we had an omen of the bad time to come when a little girl threw up in the aisle...and on Winston. When we finally landed, it was HOT. We stood in line for a very long time to buy our tickets on the Caribbean Star for Grenada, and then waited for our plane. The people working there were neither efficient nor in any hurry. The airport was being remodeled, and the waiting area had no restaurant...just duty free shops and sandwiches. When they called our flight, we lined up in the heat outside the building.

After a short flight, we finally arrived in Grenada. The airport was quite small, and it took a while to rent a car for the week. Winston suggested that we just take the local taxis, and forgo the car. For some reason, I insisted that we keep the car, even though we thought we would spend most of our time at the resort. That turned out to be a good thing! We went out to get the car, and saw that Grenada was beautiful.

Fortunately, Winston had experience in driving on the "wrong side" of the road. We took off, map in hand, to find our dream resort. When we arrived, the manager greeted us warmly, and we were given drinks and cold towels to wipe our faces. (We were SWEATING...it is very hot in Grenada in September...or at any time, for that matter. The island is 12 degrees north of the Equator.)

When I picked Grenada, by the way, I knew we were going there in hurricane season. But they hadn't had a hurricane in 49 years, since they were located so far south. Good odds!

We arrived on September 4. Everyone was moving quite slowly, and you could understand why, with that heat. An “escort” walked with us to our room. It turned out not to be an oceanfront room, so she had to take us to another one. The oceanfront whirlpool rooms were wonderful. They were like small duplex apartments. You walked onto a great porch, then into a big long room with beds, chairs, TV, and a stocked refrigerator. A door separated this room from a large bathroom, which had a huge whirlpool tub as well as a large separate shower stall.

It was close to dinnertime, but the beach was so lovely that we couldn’t resist a swim in the ocean. We got back to the room at dusk, so tired that we ordered room service. (That too was included in the one price.)

Our only complaint was that the air conditioning didn’t cool the place off enough, and that they didn’t give us many towels. We later learned that the towel thing was caused by an agreement among the resorts to conserve water on the entire island. We tried the whirlpool tub. I made the mistake of putting the bubble bath in when the water started, so we ended up with bubbles everywhere.

The next day, Sunday, September 5, we ordered breakfast brought to our table on the porch. Lovely! Little birds flew onto the table for the crumbs. We went swimming in the ocean, and I bought a souvenir from a man on the beach...a necklace of spices. We walked over to the gorgeous pool. We went to the restaurant for lunch, and then rested in the afternoon. I felt a little under the weather at dinnertime, so ate in the room while Winston went to the restaurant for dinner. He returned saying it was terrific...we must eat there from now on.

We had heard before we left home that a hurricane was forming in the Caribbean, but that it was going to hit Barbados. (We had met a Cincinnati couple headed to Barbados on our first flight, and we talked briefly about feeling badly for them.) We turned on the TV Sunday, and watched the Weather channel. It seemed that the hurricane MIGHT jog south, closer to Grenada. We weren’t too concerned at this point, but did decide to drive into the main city, St. George’s, on Monday, since the weather might get bad on Tuesday.

So on Monday, Sept. 6, we set out. The roads, said to be great in our tour book, turned out to be very narrow and winding. We drove into St. George’s, the capitol...it has a lovely harbor, very pretty. But we were driving on that wrong side of the road again, and watching out for deep ditches beside the roads. We spotted the outdoor farmers’ market, said to be great for tourists. Believe me when I tell you that it looked more than a little rough. Since we preferred the car air-conditioning, we kept driving. And promptly got lost. We kept driving and kept going further up the mountain. We did stop and ask for directions, as everything seemed to be one-way, but we were still lost. Finally Winston saw a car repair place. Leaving me sitting in the car (scary), he went in and found out how to get us out of there. By this time we had figured out that we were in a third-world country, something not apparent from our tour book. Vans full of natives would speed by us on the road, singing and shouting. At his request, I kept repeating my mantra, “Stay to the left, watch out for the ditch!” as Winston drove.

On our way back to the motel, we stopped at an indoor mall. A few people were picking up flashlights because they had heard about Hurricane Ivan, but no one was very concerned. We neglected to pick up any food or water for ourselves at the grocery store there. I did get a decorative map of Grenada. We got quite hot just walking in the parking lot to and from the car.

When we got back to our room in the afternoon, our son Bill called. He said the hurricane seemed to be heading our way. Were we going to try to get off the island? I said, “We’ll be fine”. When he said, “I hope so”, I started to get a BIT worried. We began watching the Weather channel and CNN. Indeed the

Hurricane had jogged south and was heading directly toward us. We didn't try to contact the airport to see if we could leave Grenada.

Winston did go to the front desk area to see if they had any information about the hurricane. He asked if there were any hurricane shelters on the island, and the answer was no. There was a sheet on the hotel's hurricane preparations in our room. It said that in case of a hurricane, we would be provided with two flashlights and two one-liter bottles of water. It also said that we should fill our bathtub with water. Also, though the power might go out, the resort's generator would kick on and operate everything except the air-conditioning. At the front reception area, an open area behind the outdoor restaurant, he was told that all the people on the beach would be moved to a higher level as a precaution. We were told to gather our belongings...someone would come later with a letter telling us where we were moving, and to assist us.

Late in the afternoon, a young man came and helped us move. We were moved to a whirlpool suite on higher ground behind the oceanfront units. Since it was on the first floor of a two story concrete building, it looked pretty safe. The only drawback was that it was a corner room. It had a very deep porch, though. By then it was time for dinner, so we put on our "dressy casual" clothes and went to the lovely outdoor restaurant overlooking the beach. My only dinner in this restaurant! The food was seasoned differently...lots of nutmeg and other island spices. Grenada is redolent with the smell of nutmeg...the pods cover the beaches. It is known as the spice island, and exports a lot of cinnamon and nutmeg. The restaurant was wonderful...several courses, a native performing live island music. They said they were closing early so the staff could make hurricane preparations.

After dinner, still a bit worried, we watched the Weather channel and went to bed.

The next morning, Tuesday, September 7, 2004, began cloudy and dreary. The ocean was a bit rough. There were red flags posted indicating a coming hurricane. We, along with the other people at the resort, stood around watching the ocean and joking. I took Winston's picture holding out the hurricane warning flag. At noon, we were told to pick up box lunches in the conference room. We were told we could either stay in our rooms during the hurricane, or assemble in the conference room. Though many of the others picked the conference room, we opted for our room. At this point we decided to call everyone...we called Winston's mother and Liz on our cell phones. Bill had already called us again that morning, saying that according to his computer, the storm was going to give us a direct hit. We were getting nervous, not knowing the extent of what was coming.

After lunch, we went to our room and started to watch CNN and the Weather channel again. CNN had very little information about Hurricane Ivan at that point. We tried the island TV station. I kid you not, a young man was talking about the storm, and said that since some small local government outfit (CDERA-Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency) had said to get off the beaches, "perhaps those playing soccer on the beach might briefly want to go to higher ground". He wasn't a bit sure or forceful about it. The islanders had a "don't worry" mentality. As one of our resort guards had said to me earlier, "Don't worry...we always get warnings but no storms."

Around two o'clock in the afternoon, it started raining heavily. Finally the power went...but the generator did start the TV back up. It worked for all of fifteen minutes. Then no power again. For the first few hours, it just seemed like a bad storm...I think I even said, "This isn't so bad". But around three o'clock things outside started blowing around and hitting our building, and the sliding glass doors facing the ocean were shaking as the wind was blowing directly off the ocean. Now we were getting scared, and we moved into the bathroom, where we had already filled the whirlpool tub with water. We took some chaise lounge cushions with us so that we could lie down on the floor. Then, all hell broke loose. Suddenly we heard a big crash. When we looked out the bathroom door, we saw that a roof from the building in front of ours had blown off and that part of it had come through our sliding glass door. There was glass all over

the floor and bed. Things got louder. We both got into the concrete shower stall and pulled the cushions over our heads. There was a small window across from the stall, and I was afraid that a projectile could come through it and impale one of us. I asked Winston not to have his back against the faucet handle...I was afraid something would fly in and hit him and push him back into that handle. We huddled on the floor of the stall as the noise increased, finally sounding like a jet engine was in there with us. The air pressure dropped so much that our ears were popping, and the wind so strong that sand in the wind was stinging us, even covered up in the shower stall. This went on for two hours, like a tornado that sits on top of your house for hours instead of minutes. I was terrified, and making little sobbing sounds. Winston was also frightened, but kept patting my knee trying to comfort me.

The eye came over us at around five o'clock that evening. Right before it got there, the rain and wind and noise was terrible. We thought there was a good chance that we might die. Then the eye came, lasting for about half an hour. During the calm we left the bathroom to survey the situation. Aside from the roof section coming through one glass door, the remaining glass had held, and there was no other damage. The ocean was now up to the steps of our porch, about 10 feet above normal sea level, and about 50 yards inland.

During the lull in the storm from the hurricane eye, two wonderful young Grenada men, guards at the resort, came to the room yelling for us. They said that everyone was quite worried about us. The people in the conference room had had a rough time, at one point moving to the kitchen because they were afraid the roof would blow off. One of the women had become hysterical. We asked them if they knew anything about the fate of their own families...they didn't. All communications were down, and they were afraid that if they left they might not get back. They tried to get us to leave our room and go to the conference room, but by this time we had decided we were safer where we were. I hope they didn't get in trouble...the manager really wanted us where he could keep track of us.

They said they would bring us a bag dinner, which they did shortly. One of them also brought sheets, since our bed was covered in glass. I am so grateful for that kindness. I know they didn't realize at that point that with the resort almost destroyed, their livelihoods were gone too. The resort jobs had to be some of the best on that poor island. They said they would be back in the morning to check on us and to bring breakfast, and begged us to be safe. Though we had one flashlight, we asked for the two the hotel was supposed to provide. They said there were only two flashlights...TOTAL...at the resort.

After the eye left, the second part of the storm lasted from 6 o'clock Tuesday evening until about 7 o'clock Wednesday morning, another 13 hours. The wind was now coming from the opposite direction, and we were somewhat protected by a very large hill behind our building. Even so, the wind was still very loud, and not knowing what to expect, we retreated back to the bathroom for protection. Every once in while, the wind seemed to die down, as the hurricane bands came and went. We would peak out the door. Then the storm would pick back up, and we would retreat to the bathroom.

In the bathroom we were now alternating between the shower and sleeping on the floor, depending on how hard the wind was blowing. In addition to the noise of the wind, a piece of roofing on top of our two-story building had come partially loose and was banging very loudly against the side of the building, giving Winston a headache. We thought it would never stop. About midnight, I said that I was so tired I would have to sleep in the bed, no matter what the danger. So we put the clean sheets on and moved there. Around three o'clock in the morning the wind got very strong again, woke us up, and sent us back to the bathroom again. We finished the night sleeping on the cushions on the bathroom floor.

At around seven o'clock the next morning, Wednesday, our two guards returned, again yelling, "Mr. and Mrs. Cochrane, are you OK? We are so worried about you." They brought a sack breakfast, and asked us not to walk outside much as there was debris and glass everywhere. The storm was over.

We were very hot, I might add. No air conditioning. Even with no door on our room, it was like a furnace both night and day. We ventured out and looked around, and couldn't believe the devastation we were seeing. The trees were stripped bare, and most of the native wooden homes on the hill behind us were either damaged or destroyed. The concrete construction of our resort's buildings had held up, but most of the roofs were gone. Winston went up to the office to see what was happening. I was exhausted, and so was he. I said that no way was I starting any day without coffee. The only "power" we had was from two small kerosene lamps in the room. I made instant coffee over the flame. He came back to tell me that the restaurant was destroyed, the bungalow we had been in first was destroyed...it was all destroyed. At this point one of the European women came into the room, saying she had been very worried about us. (She was impressed with my ingenuity in making coffee!)

During this first day after the storm, we went back and forth to the main building several times. We only saw one security guard, and he was sitting just staring at the ocean. At noon, the resort manager had the few employees still present put out salad and other things from the refrigerator, knowing nothing would keep without power. They said this was to serve as dinner also, and we started to become worried about the food situation. Winston walked up the beach to survey the damage to other hotels and to check the grocery store we went to on Monday. The store, which had been boarded up, had been looted already. There were a couple of groups of young men going up and down the beach, probably looting, but they didn't appear aggressive. They stopped at our resort and talked to the security guard, but then left.

We tried our cell phones, which had worked so wonderfully before the storm. Nothing. We wanted to let Bill and Liz know that we were safe, but soon found that there were no communications anywhere. The people staying in the conference room had made beds on the floor. The one toilet had backed up, as no one had thought to run water through the tank to get it to flush. Since we were using the water from our whirlpool tub to flush our toilet, we decided to continue in our room, which had no door, but which at least had some sanitation.

All of the other resort guests were European, and most of them started drinking that morning, and continued until the bar was emptied the next day. Hurricane party! No bartender, so the manager just pulled out a lot of bottles of liquor, cola, iced tea, etc. We immediately realized that at our age (both of us were sixty-three) we would quickly become dehydrated, so every time a box of bottled water appeared, we each took a bottle back to the room. I honestly think that we were the only ones concerned at that time about water. I told Winston to avoid the colas, as they act as natural diuretics.

That afternoon, I sat a lot and tried to stay cool. We went to the ocean, where I shampooed my hair. We finished cleaning up back in the room with water from the tub. Five minutes later, we were again drenched in sweat. Winston at one point walked to the police station located behind our resort. We had seen animals tethered outside the station in a large field before the storm. He came back to the room and asked me if I wanted to see a goat being slaughtered. I passed. I could already hear the poor animal!

Other guests were still milling around and wondering about getting off the island. Winston knew that we couldn't drive anywhere that day, Wednesday, as the roads around the resort were impassible with fallen trees, utility poles and flooding. And nothing was flying in or out of the airport. That afternoon a British warship put down anchor some way out from the resort. The resort manager was trying to contact them with some kind of a walkie-talkie device, and the Brits were very encouraged, thinking that the ship would take them off the island. Winston didn't see that as much of a possibility...there were after all thousands of tourists on the island. But hey, we decided we could become British real quickly if we had to! Just in case this did happen, we packed up everything so as to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Late in the afternoon, one of the other guests told Winston that there was a working phone up the hill at

the Flamboyant hotel. But it was going to get dark soon, and our only flashlight had quit on us. I had extra batteries, but the bulb had burned out. No way he could get there and back before dark.

Meanwhile at home our children were getting more and more worried. Bill spent hours following everything on the Internet, and learned that some people were getting messages out from the Flamboyant. He and Liz phoned back and forth. Liz contacted a woman from Reuters for any information she might have. Bill called the State Department, which had little information. They talked to Winston's brother in Denver, Dave, and to his mother, Marie. Marie had learned that the one prison on Grenada was severely damaged in the hurricane, and that all the prisoners had escaped. Looting was taking place. Prisoners had machetes. Bill and Liz wondered how they might bring our bodies back to the states. Bill informed Liz that my two cats (hers originally) would be coming her way via a Fed Ex box. Bill's wife Judy's family called several times a day to see if we'd been found.

One guest had gotten angry earlier in the day with the resort manager. The guest said that since everything in the freezer would spoil, the manager should let us start a fire and cook the meat. The manager finally agreed, and at around dusk we walked up to the beach. Not needing my "dressy casual" clothes, I cut off a pair of slacks to make shorts. A British woman had started a cooking fire on the beach. People were starting to get very cranky. Another guest, a man, tried to tell her how to cook the chicken, and he and the woman's husband almost had a fistfight. So we had a feast of all the remaining food, chicken, fish and steak. There was more talk of rescue by the British ship. We ate sitting on a log next to a young couple from Britain. The poor kids were on their honeymoon, and had arrived just the night before the hurricane. The husband said he was going to rely on his travel agent to get them off the island. His young wife was upset with him for dragging her on this honeymoon (it had been a surprise for her). One very nice German couple offered us any help we needed. After dinner, we walked back in the dark to our room. Winston said, "You know, that was the last of the food." I wasn't too concerned about that since I was avoiding most of the food anyway, but I was very concerned about water.

We were so tired that we again walked around the broken glass and slept in our bed, without a door, that Wednesday night. Winston slept with his shoes on, so he wouldn't cut his feet. I put mine right beside me and stepped into them before I got up. We could sleep because we were so tired, in spite of the heat. (Also, we didn't know about the prisoners with machetes!) Winston was asleep, and I was dozing, when suddenly a large brown animal walked right into the room. I thought "LION", and screamed. It was only a poor hungry domestic dog, who had smelled food in our trash container. The poor thing ran out...Winston, wide awake by then, threw the left over food out to him. We slept again. At about 11:00 pm, I woke up to the sound of another goat being slaughtered. Why, I don't know. And every half hour after that, someone slaughtered a goat, until about 2:00 am. I had never heard anything that horrible, and Winston was able to sleep right through it.

However, after I got to sleep (about 2:30 am), Winston woke up (about 3:00 am) and started becoming really fearful about our safety. He knew we needed to get off the island. He knew the chances of us getting sick or hurt were getting greater. He knew the food and water were gone. At first light, about 5:00 am, he got up and woke me up. I was so tired that I wanted to kill him. **JUST LET ME SLEEP.** He said that even though he knew how I would feel when he woke me, he had to do it. He said he was going to walk up to the Flamboyant and try to get through to Bill and Liz, and that as soon as he got back we were going to try to get to the US Embassy. I made my cup of coffee and got dressed. I owe him big time for making me get up when he did.

No one at the Flamboyant was up, so he had to come back without making his call. At this point, he was ready for us to try to get out. He had talked to some of the other guests (who had slept on the beach because of the heat), and told them we were going to try the US Embassy. He said we would come back if we got any information. In order to be prepared for anything, we dragged our luggage to the car, and set

out. (I think we were the only guests with a car). He had gotten directions to the Embassy the day before at the police station. The roads were somewhat cleared. He figured that with all the power on the island down, the power lines were not live and we could drive over them.

We passed the mall...looted and deserted. We saw an armed policeman by a pharmacy. We had to stop for directions several times, but we finally got to the small Embassy. There was destruction everywhere. People were walking about looking dazed. But every native, no matter how bad off, was friendly and helpful to us. We later learned that there were many injuries and at least 37 deaths, and that the British ship was there for search and rescue and to provide medical support to the hospital in St. George's. At the Embassy, there was one lone native guard at the front gate. He told Winston that the Americans weren't there, but some would arrive about 8 am. Winston asked if we could wait in the Embassy, and was told "no". We later learned that most of the embassy people had flown off the island when they learned about the hurricane.

We decided to head for the airport to see if we could get information. When we got there, several policemen were standing around. Winston went in, and I stayed with the car and our luggage. When he came out, he said that there was a working phone, and that he had been able to contact Bill. Bill said later that he had never heard his Dad sound so worried and anxious. He told Bill that our situation was bad, and asked him to let Liz know that we were OK. He gave Bill the name of a man to call at his company, General Electric. GE uses a company that specializes in evacuating their employees out of bad situations. This was a bad situation! Winston told Bill he would call him back in half an hour.

When he came back to the car, he told me the news, and we locked the car and both went back to make the next phone call. A policeman told us that the airport was officially closed, although there didn't appear to be any damage there, and no one knew when flights would resume. He also told us that the US had just flown in some people, and they were headed to the embassy. We decided to return there after we called Bill again. I sat down in a line of people waiting for the phone, many of them students from the American medical school in Grenada. Winston was away talking to someone, when suddenly from around the corner came a man in a suit who asked, "Does anyone want to go to Barbados?" He told everyone who did to form a line. I was second in line. When Winston stepped back over, I told him what had happened. He asked the man if we could take luggage (we were prepared to leave everything if we had to!) The man said yes, if we got it quickly. I said I would stay in line and sign whatever was required, and he ran to the car and dragged all the luggage (I had WAY too much) into the airport. There was no one at the rental car office, so we left the car and mailed the keys back after we got home. One poor female medical student in the line started crying and said she didn't have her passport, and left.

I signed our names, and the man said to follow him, which we did. He pointed to a plane, and said to board. We all started running for it, not knowing that it wouldn't even fill up. A wonderful young medical student said, "Let me help you", and grabbed part of the luggage. We got to the plane, got on, got seats, and everyone started cheering. An older couple in front of us were Muslims from London. The wife spoke no English, but her husband told us they had been visiting relatives and had gone to airport like we had for information.

It turned out that a small Caribbean airline had flown in from Barbados with some of that country's officials to assess the damage. The officials were staying in Grenada, and the plane, a turboprop with about 50 seats, was going to return to Barbados empty, so they decided to take anyone who wanted to go, at no charge! This was the first commercial plane to leave Grenada. The flight took off, and we all cheered again. The pilot gave his standard announcement about our flying time and altitude, and thanked us for flying with them. Winston said "Thank you for flying us!" The air conditioning came on. A flight attendant offered us coffee. Civilization! The students were talking, complaining about their treatment from the medical school. And about the lack of response from the American Embassy, which cared more

about their well being in the 1980's when their well being was President Reagan's stated reason for invading Grenada. I heard the young man who had helped Winston tell another student that he didn't have enough money to get home to the US. When we got off the plane, we handed him some of our cash, and told him we wanted him to be able to get home.

In 45 minutes, we landed on Barbados. As soon as the plane landed, Winston used his cell phone to call Bill to tell him about our luck. Only 2 hours after his first call, we had left Grenada and were safe on Barbados, and to tell GE we no longer needed to be rescued. We tried for an immediate flight home, but couldn't get one. So we decided to stay there until Saturday, and take our scheduled flight to Newark. We got the name of a beach hotel close to the airport and called to make a reservation. As we drove there in the taxi, we saw very little damage, mostly tree limbs down. We registered, but had to wait a bit for our room, so we went to the bar for lunch. Winston called Bill again to give him further details of our trip, and to tell him he was sitting in a restaurant on the beach drinking a cold beer! We had been in the right place at the right time! I think hearing Bill's voice, and my grandson Will's voice, almost did me in. I had been afraid that I wouldn't see my children or Will again, or our unborn granddaughter, Ellie. (Judy had invited us to see Ellie's sonogram before we left on this trip. She had already waved at us!) Bill told us that Rob, Liz's husband, had had a bad car wreck that morning, but that he wasn't injured. So we called her, told her what we were doing, and said we would see them when we got back to Newark. She told us about her phone calls to Reuters, and to Dave and Marie. Bill had told us that she was pretty shaken up, between us being missing and Rob's wreck, but we couldn't tell that.

We went to our wonderful air-conditioned room and collapsed. We had each lost 7-10 lbs. of water weight during our ordeal. This was Thursday...we would be back in the USA on Saturday! I kept thinking about the poor locals on Grenada...homes gone, food and water scarce, jobs gone. I thought about how lucky we were. I worried about the others at our resort. How would they fare?

When we went to breakfast on Friday, we passed people at the pool and heard someone say, "There are the Americans!" We saw the German couple we liked so much at our resort in Grenada sitting by the pool at our hotel in Barbados. They told us that on the afternoon of the day we got out the manager finally arranged a charter flight for the guests. But not everyone could get on the first flight, so they had to have a lottery, and it got ugly. As far as they knew, all but the one British honeymoon couple took the charters. They were still counting on their local travel agent to get them out. The travel agent had lost her home...I hope someone got them out.

As we went to check out from the hotel, we saw another young couple arrive. Winston heard the manager say that they had just arrived from Grenada. Someone asked them what it was like. They shook their heads, and said they wouldn't talk about it. It was that bad.

When we got to the Barbados airport on Saturday, we were in line with more medical students from Grenada. One small group was quickly putting down hot dogs...I asked one of the girls when she got off Grenada. She said they were in the airport there until Saturday morning...no sanitation, no food, and no water. The flights that left were first come, first served, and full. People were getting sick. That hot dog was her first meal since Tuesday. We talked to a man who had had to make it to the airport from the other side of Grenada, where he was looking at property for a future resort. He told us that it was as bad on the island as anything he had seen in Vietnam.

I went to the few shops by the airport and bought a few souvenirs, just not the ones from Grenada that I had hoped for. We were processed into the waiting area for international flights, and passed the time picking up rum for the kids. Winston could even call them on his cell phone to see what they wanted! Then we got onto the plane for Newark. Cheers again. Also cheers when we landed in the States. I have never smelled anything as good as those greasy cheeseburgers in the Newark airport. I knew I was home.

That evening, on our way to the hotel where we would meet Liz and Rob, we saw the twin beams of light from where the World Trade Center buildings had once stood. It was September 11, 2004.

I was so glad to see Liz and Rob...they had stories of his wreck, and of another mis-adventure, for us. (Just ask Rob: he will give you some money.). They were so wonderful. They had planned to have these things to tell us to take our minds off Grenada. Liz had a darling little love angel for us. How did we get so lucky?

Then Sunday we flew to Cincinnati. Bill and Will had come all the way out to the airport to meet us! Two guys never looked so beautiful. Besides all the worrying and phone calls, Bill had mowed our lawn so Winston wouldn't have to, and offered to grocery shop or do whatever we needed. How did we get so lucky?

That's the story of the most dangerous and frightening experience in our lives. We got out...we have a wonderful family...we are blessed.

Betsy Cochrane      January 10, 2005