

## **The Ups and Downs of a Suriname October**

October was a month of ups and downs! Finally, on October 2, after being in Suriname since August 23, a phone line was finally made active in our house! What a blessing that was! As many of you may know, I am an internet junkie, and love to surf the web and chat with friends online. Not having a phone was tough for me to handle personally, but I know it is was one of the many ways God is working on me.

However, not too long after that, the power plant (which is generated by a dam) in Suriname sprung a leak in their machine room, causing it to flood. That single event caused the power in Suriname to go out for 36 hours! We had one day of school in total darkness, which also meant no air conditioners. Even though the day went on as normally scheduled, it was quite trying! The tropics are not only hot, but humid! Our school is fortunate in that we do have air conditioners. Without them students were irritable, and we were all hot and miserable. We were ready to cancel school the next day, but the power came on later that evening, which meant we could have school.

Not too long after that I went shopping for groceries, only to come back outside and notice that my bicycle had been stolen. This event, happening so close to the armed robbery I told you about last month, greatly discouraged me. Not having a bike forced me to walk to school, which actually ended being kind of nice. I would pray as I walked, and enjoy some of the flowers and trees that I normally just passed by and never noticed. The walk home from school, however, was always a hot one! A missionary family here has since loaned me a new bicycle to use.

That aspect is one of the greatest about living in a missionary community. Here I am constantly surrounded by believers, people who share in my beliefs and can encourage me in my walk with God. As a result, it is so much easier not to sin, and to stay focused on God. Additionally, we all take care of one another, because we are all coping with the same stress and hardships of living in a third-world country. I am quite grateful for that!

Parent-teacher conferences also happened during the month of October. I was pleased that each of my conferences went well, and that all but two parents showed up. It was encouraging to see the support of the parents, and to hear their praise about my teaching. We are lucky to have some parents here who are truly involved in the education of their children, and not just letting the teachers do it on their own.

Additionally, a big step was taken in the immigration process here in Suriname. Unlike the United States, our visas (while good for one year) must be renewed every three months. On certain occasions, the Suriname government even requires that foreigners leave the country before renewing a visa. In order to sidestep the silly rules and “day to day” changes in the immigration process that seemed to be happening, it was suggested that we all try to become legal residents of Suriname. After filling out some paperwork, and going to some government locations in person, all the teachers at our school (except for those new this year) were granted residency in Suriname. As a result, I no longer need to get my visa renewed every 3 months. Getting residency status is a great step forward, and a wonderful thing to have happened.

My participation in the youth group continues to go well. I am now in charge of organizing skits for each youth group meeting. I am drawing on my experiences as a camp counselor at Green Lake Bible Camp for most of my skit ideas, and it is fun to watch the kids practice a skit, and then perform it in front of their peers at youth group. For some of these kids, this is the first time they've done any performing, so seeing them up on stage doing a skit for God is a wonderful event to watch.

Another interesting event happened during the month of October. One of my students invited me, as well as my housemate Adam, to his birthday party! Apparently, he enjoys both of us so much that he wanted to spend his birthday with us fishing (instead of his friends). So, on a Friday afternoon we all went to a river in Suriname called the Saramacca, which is known for the piranha that live there, and that's what we were fishing for! Unfortunately, though, we did not catch any piranha... in fact, we didn't even get nibbles (although I did catch a clump of dirt, a tree, and stick).

As you all may know, the kinds of students I am working with are called Third Culture Kids (TCKs), meaning that they have a passport from one country, but are living in another, but can't claim either culture as their own. One trait of the TCK family is that they often move, as parents are transferred or simply need to leave for personal reasons. Sadly, this has already happened to two of my students, and I'm told that one more student will be leaving at the end of the semester. However, I did gain one new student in my homeroom class, so it has been fun getting to know him.

Please pray for continued support and guidance in all decisions I make here in Suriname. I wish to be the best teacher that I can for my students, and to choose the right lessons and implement the correct discipline measures when needed. Also, pray for our kids, who are finally starting to feel comfortable talking about their spiritual beliefs openly. The Lord is certainly at work here, and I pray that He will do mighty things!

For those of you supporting me, thank you so much! Your support has been received by NICS and I have gotten written confirmation that it has been transferred to my account. If you wish to help support me, go to my website (<http://sdickens.tripod.com>) where you can download forms or print one right from there.

And in case you were wondering about Halloween, no, it is not celebrated here. I didn't even have a Halloween party to go to! But alas, that's life in Suriname, and another chapter in my life (well, for October at any rate). Thank you all for your continued prayers and support.

In Christ,

-Steven