

STORIES OF OUTRAGEOUS SUCCESS™

Outrageous Success comes in many shapes, challenges and experiences. Mickey and Frank share the first month of “living their dream”. Their tale is an inspiration for us all to dream ...and to pay attention to the rich learnings available to us when we gather our courage and step into our dreams.

“There are very few places on earth so minute and so grandiose at the same time as St John. Its fun to be able to disappear on a 15 square mile island”

Are we there yet?

– Jeremy Zuber, newcomer

After a year and a half of retirement; and actively searching for a tropical location where we could live and work, we depart Charlotte, NC for St John on February 9. Starting April 1, we become the property managers of Coconut Coast Villas (coconutcoast.com). We will spend February and March renovating an office to create our new home. Coconut Coast Villas is 9 condos (studios and 2 bedrooms) on the ocean in Turner Bay, St John. Its much more low key and kitschy than a Westin or Caneel Bay or renting a high end villa and we love its charm. As we’ve said before....who knew we’d go from being bankers to property managers?

We had moved out of our condo January 9 so some friends could move in and watch over the place for at least a year. Isn’t it great how things work out? It’s also wonderful to have great family and friends who will welcome you into their homes for awhile - we had time to say our farewells. Given that we had moved out of our place and not yet into our new one, Frank put in the back of our station wagon our doormat that says “Welcome to the Addison’s”. Funny guy, huh?

At the airport on the way to St John, Mickey misplaces Frank’s driver’s license right after we go through security which causes several moments of panic, frustration and finally a found ID (in Mickey’s wallet). Interesting to temporarily lose your identity on the way to a new place where few people know you.

We arrive in Paradise on St John (late Feb 9) and yet, since our first task is to renovate our future 500 Square Feet living space, it feels a little more like purgatory. We are blessed with the friendship of 3 wonderful women (the 3 wise women) here on St John who we met during our 2 month

exploration visit last summer. One, Elaine, picks us up at the ferry with our last load of belongings and clothes. Her jeep is so full that Mickey has to sit on Frank's lap in the front seat to drive to our place.

Another of these fabulous women, Mary, is off island our first week here and has offered us her house in exchange for animal sitting. The animals consist of the one legged parrot whom we call "I-lean", a deaf/blind dog and a seemingly intact cat. It is heaven coming home after scrubbing, painting, and general construction work all day to a hot shower, clean bed and TV. Our third wise woman, Anna, checks in with us early on to see when we can come out to play. (We tell to check back with us in April.)

Our first night here is a full moon....new beginnings and adventures. As the sign in our Charlotte condo says "Wish it, dream it, do it". We wished and dreamed long enough and now we take the plunge and "DO IT". I see a quote today that seems appropriate to our current state: "I have the thrill of planning my future all over again." And so we begin our dream.

Adjusting

By the end of our first week we make our first solo trip to St Thomas with a borrowed truck. We take the car barge, an experience in itself, where you back in and are tight as sardines with every kind of vehicle. It's about a 15 minute voyage (depending on which barge) to Red Hook, St Thomas. If you happen to get on the Roanoker, you are blessed with palm trees on deck and a snack bar (mostly alcohol) which is to compensate for the sloooooow crossing.

This is our first excursion (of 3 in 4 days) to St Thomas for Home Depot and renovation supplies, along with a visit to Office Max to check prices for the office equipment, then Kmart for general household things and CostULess for some fresh food supplies (that are cheaper than on St John). It is a full day excursion to go to St Thomas for provisioning.

I'm reminded during this trip of how spoiled I am 'stateside' to have things so convenient and multiples choices of about anything I might want. Not here. Here I take what they have, when I can find it and pay full price which is absolutely hitting Mickey's frugal gene ("Hubbard" gene according to our friend Chris). Mickey is used to fun searches for the best value for the cheapest price. The solution here? Need less so you spend less.

Can we say overbooked? Remember, we have only lived on St John for 2 months this summer before coming back here this trip. During that time we not only meet the 3 wise women but also meet a cousin-in-law of Frank's. Between the 4 of these women, we are triple booked one evening. What a great way to feel welcomed back.

Week Two: "3 men and a lady"

One of the owners, Ken and his son KC, arrive to help with major construction tasks. Ken is a general contractor in Boston and KC is a firefighter who is licensed for construction. A hurricane of activity ensues. Jack hammering out a cement stoop to install a sump pump, build out a new office space so the current office becomes our bedroom, cutting a cement wall to add a window, and on and on. Ken supervises, KC and Frank execute, Mickey assists including the hardware runs with Ken. (Mickey's learned more about construction and maintenance than she ever knew...just watch her change out a doorknob.)

- What happens when you send Mickey to St Thomas on her own to place a BIG Home Depot order for renovation supplies? She finds a wonderful man (Julio) to help her and laugh with her at her own lack of hardware knowledge like backer board vs. dry wall, male cable couplings, M grade copper piping and more.
- How many men does it take to install a new shut off PVC valve in the exposed pipes running along our ceiling? Apparently 3 and all in an 18" space.
- When someone turns the water back on to the whole building before you're ready and a gusher happens in the newly connected pipe, what do you do? Sing, "Singing in the rain".
- Important Learning: Never pick up window foam sealant when it is wet.....for the remainder of the day, Mickey's hand is a permanent post-it-note
- On one hardware run, we have to move the driver's seat up so far that only Mickey can fit in so she has her virgin drive on St John. Left side of the road with the steering wheel on the left with narrow roads that are very hilly..... the idea of "be present" is easy when you are driving this way and terrified.

Space, Flushing and More Adjusting

One of our first priorities is to get a bathroom that is usable. We have no place to put any clothes so Frank builds us some shelves in the bathroom and we use a shelf in the storage room for our pantry. We learn that Chico Bags (nylon reusable grocery bags) work for lots of things including holding your clean underwear to that they aren't stacked on the new shelves for everyone to see.

On the bathroom front. When you live at or below sea level and are on a septic system and you have a sump pump attached and you are asked not to flush any paper products.....don't flush any paper products! Unless you want to take apart the sump pump, unclog what's blocking it (ew!) and start over.....speaking from personal experience our first week here..... DON'T FLUSH PAPER PRODUCTS!

One of the next important things we do is to buy our very own "bug swatters". They're these tennis racquet shaped battery powered zappers. We doubted they really worked until we were here this summer. Now that we own 2 of our very own, we are feeling a lot more like locals. It's a good thing we got our shots. Given the volume of mosquitoes that can exist, at least we won't catch anything.

Our official first guests (from Charlotte) stop by to visit us. They are renting a house in Chocolate Hole and came by for wine and cheese. Given the general state of disarray and chaos of our space, it was a good reminder that when you invite folks over they usually are more interested in visiting with you versus your house.

So what have we learned our full first month?

- When there is a brief rain storm, it is like a good blow of your nose, it really clears things out.
- An iguana can't scale a cement wall no matter how much of a running start it gets. (Did you know they raise their tale and run like hell when scared?)
- Who knew peacocks could poop so much?
- Roosters don't just crow at dawn, it's always dawn to them.
- When buying new door knobs, you get the same key sets if you match the codes on the back of the boxes... the first time.

- That a single navel orange can cost you \$3.00. (We'll never take for granted the oranges we sometimes get at Christmas from Mickey's sister Kim.)
- When you have a very small space and are moving "stuff" around a lot and cleaning it a lot, it is easy to decide you just don't need a lot of "stuff".
- we are grateful to have bodies that still allow us to go up and down ladders, work physically 8 hours a day, sweat non-stop and walk everywhere we need to go (until we get our car)....in spite of swollen ankles, aching joints and Aleve twice a day.
- It's amazing what some paint does, what flaws it can cover and how it brightens up a place.
- You gotta stay flexible....in approach and physically.
- One of the best rewards after a long hot day of working is a snorkel in Frank Bay (our first snorkel back on-island felt like visiting old friends since this is one of our favorite snorkel spots and a short nature trail walk away.)
- Thanks to our wonderful brother-in-law Billy, we are both very conscious of wearing sun screen and hats when we are out.
- On an island this small (9x5 miles and 80% national park), everyone knows everything or pretends they do or makes it up. ("the island has ears" as well as a coconut telegraph)
- Gratitude is a wonderful quality to have as well as grace and joy...they do attract similar energy to you.
- Knowing people helps....we find a car (Suzuki sidekick) via a woman we met the first day we were here this summer at a "pool cocktail party" where you had to be in the pool to get a cocktail.
- Mickey has come to appreciate her naturally curly hair with its waves and craziness. No more OJ cans or ironing (with iron and board) to get straight hair (like in high school) or cutting it super short. While we're here she says it will be longer, fuller (aka- wider) and free to do its own thing (maybe we both can learn to do that more).
- The weather is very predictable: 84 degrees and 30% chance of rain.
- The water really is cooler in the winter months (Frank has complained of shrinkage on more than one occasion.)
- Some guests will really ask you if you can turn down the sound of the surf against the rocks so they can sleep at night.

And So...More on Flushing

February has been a month of getting our living space habitable. March will be about converting the existing property management business over to the Home Owners Association so we can manage it. Stay tuned for our update on island bureaucracy. Oh yeah.....one of the wonders of these villas is that we are on city water versus cisterns so we can drink the water and not have to go to St John Ice Company every few days to get drinkable water. Having said that, though, water is a very precious commodity here so as we were told during my freshman dorm days, “if it’s yellow let it mellow, if it’s brown, flush it down”.

Please check out the website and send us feedback. One of the first things we plan to do after April 1 is update it - suggestions welcome!

We close with Frank’s 2009 Mantra -

Grace and Joy