

Good Afternoon,

Today is May Day celebrated in Grenada. May Day is our Labour Day (British spelling). It really is the 1st of May, but since the 1st was Sunday, then Monday is the holiday observed. Pretty much everything is closed today. It's supposed to be so that the unions can get together and march, wearing their union shirts, etc., but I saw them doing that yesterday on my way home from church. So I guess the beaches will probably have a lot of people on them today. :-)

We've made a little progress with the insurance situation. Social Security sent someone to the embassy here in Grenada, and I was able to get an appointment and see them. They said that their office in the Dominican Republic serves 30 countries, but only has a staff of 6, so they are overwhelmed. She said she has asked for more staff, but there is no funding available for that, so most Americans who live in those 30 countries are really not served well at all. She said she knew that most people did not get through on the phone.

She said she would put in our application to enroll in medicare, but that she could not say whether or not I would be accepted. It will take 3 or 4 months before they will have an answer, and then they usually mail it, so that will be another month or so. We also applied for Susan, although it was a little early for her.

I still have a medical insurance application in process otherwise. It has been over 2 months now. They keep asking for tests, reports, exams, doctors' letters, etc. I'm beginning to think they're just trying to find some reason to tell me no. (Susan does have health insurance - I'm the only one who didn't renew because the premium went up so much when I turned 65.)

Next week is the CPEA at school - Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment. It is 2 days of external exams from the Caribbean Examination Council administered at a secondary school nearby by the Ministry of Education. It is a lot of pressure on the 6th graders, and is a process to determine which secondary school (grades 7-11) they will be assigned to. Parents sometimes make it worse by threatening the child with punishment if they don't get into a "good" school. The reality is that only the top 10% really get their choice of school - 10% don't get placed (have to repeat grade 6), and the remaining 80% are pretty much assigned geographically, but the whole process is very stressful for such young students. The external exam is not the only part of the process. The students have been working on "school-based assessments" the whole school year, which include an extensive group project, multiple writing assignments and book reports, creating student tests (the students have to write a test from things they have studied), and so on. In the midst of all that, we still have take them through the 6th grade curriculum. As you can guess, it's also a lot of work for the teacher. One teacher cannot handle all the work that is required for grade 6.

As far as covid goes, the gov't. had removed the mask mandate a month ago for the first time in 2 years. We are currently experiencing a covid surge with a sharp increase

in the number of infections. (This round of infections - omicron - is not as deadly as what we had last year - delta.) The mask mandate was removed, we think, primarily to encourage more tourists to come to Grenada, and because elections are due to be called sometime in the next few months. (We don't have a set election date, like in the USA. Elections just have to be called within 5 years of the last election. Then we have about a 6-week campaign season, and then it's over.) We will let you know when they announce the election date.

In Grenada,

Reuben & Susan Mains