

THE BERMUDA BLACKOUT: AFTERMATH

SO WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN THE POWER WENT OFF?

# Taking the blackout in a leisurely stride

By Stacey Smith

## STREET TALK

Candle-light dinners, barbecues, trips to the beach, or just a time to chat, laugh and reminisce with friends and family...

Bermuda took the Blackout 2005 - as it might well become known - in a very leisurely stride, it would seem. Last Thursday's power cuts may have been a nuisance, of course, but there was one big benefit: the weekend came early.

And Bermuda's residents are rarely at a loss over how to spend a bit of quality R & R time!

This trait was reaffirmed when *The Royal Gazette* this week asked people in Hamilton how they spent those dark hours.

Dee-Ah Gordon said she used it as a time to connect with family and friends.

"It made me feel grateful for the things that we take for granted."

"I feel sorry for those people who daily don't enjoy the luxuries that we have in Bermuda." She also said she used the time as a test run for hurricane season.

"Now I know where my candles and flashlights are - but I need to get a generator fast."

Glen Wilks and Carmel Baxter took the opportunity to have all the family together.

"Nobody had to go to work, nobody had to leave the house so we just hung out together."

Luckily, they were among those who did not have their electricity off for long.

"We lost our power for a couple of hours but it was back on at 7.30 a.m.," they said.

Another fortunate resident was Leslie Scott, whose electricity was only out about a couple of hours.

Even while the lights were off it didn't stop her from livin' it up.

"We barbecued and ate candle light dinners," she said.

C.A. Smith said after his electricity went out at 3 a.m., it was back on by 6 that morning. "It didn't really bother me because I went through that years ago."

Twenty-four-year-old Eduarda Couto's power went off between 3 and 7 a.m. "I went to the beach and went to the store."

Bermuda's pink sands and rich blue waters were certainly a big attraction. That along with the itchy humidity was the perfect blend to draw in the crowds.

"I discovered it was a blackout once I arrived to work, after driving through the chaos of traffic," said 26-year-old Michelle Kromer. "The only thing to do was go to the beach. I went to John Smith's Bay."

"We don't have a breeze where we are so it really makes you appreciate that electricity," she said, "the peace and quiet was nice."

Forty-six-year-old Carla Hunt said she took a dip the first day.

"And then I was wondering how I was going to get a bath," she said laughing. "I went swimming right off the wharf down my house, got salt water to flush the toilet and went back on the beach and stayed there all day." The second day she stayed at home to relax.

As did many others - they simply put their feet up and chilled at home.

"I just put out my candles, sat off on my balcony and relaxed," said 42-year-old Paulette Burford.

For 38-year-old Shorta Ranks the power cuts were a chance of religious reflection.

"I just sat in with my brethren and chanted the psalm."

He added: "A lot of things will take place on earth but a lot of people aren't ready for it. This is a minor thing and people panic."

Sixty-eight-year-old Donald Burgess said: "I sat up in the house, read and was thankful because it could've been worse than it was."

Joe Melo said his children and grandchildren went to the beach but he stayed at home and enjoyed a good meal. "I have a gas stove so it was no problem, my wife did a lot of cooking."

Unfortunately, some people didn't have much R & R time, if any!

Forty-two-year-old Jay Rihihiuoma displayed admirable dedication to his job. "I worked. We (Rihihiuoma's Flying Colours) were open everyday."

He made good use of the resources that were available: "We had no power so we used calculators instead of cash registers, wrote the credit cards on the old imprint machines and hoisted goods out of the warehouse with block and tackle."

Many were full of praise for Belco's hard working staff.

Twenty-four-year-old Kristin White, who knew from the heat that the electricity was out and went to the beach to have a BBQ, said: "I was definitely surprised about how quickly they got things up and running. When I saw the smoke I thought they oversteated how quickly the power will come back on - I thought it would be out for a few days."

Of course, there were also those people who missed the drama: they were off the island.

Eric Totten, 33, knew there was something wrong when he couldn't get in touch with a florist on the island.

"It was my tenth anniversary and I couldn't get flowers to my wife", he said.

He was in the US on a course at the time.

Sixty-five-year-old John Saunders was in Baltimore when he received a call at 8 a.m., informing him of the island-wide power outage. "I came back on the island Thursday evening, and when I got home the lights were on so it was no problem - everything was intact."

Roger Butterfield spent the first day in Huntsville, Alabama, but caught the tail-end of the blackout.

"We just assembled over my in-laws and spent some quality time together."

Mr. Butterfield was not the only one who took advantage of the tranquillity to spend good times with family. With the TV and computers out of order many people found more time to chat, laugh and reminisce.

The Blackout 2005 certainly was an event to remember.



Carla Hunt



Eric Totten and son Max



Eduarda Couto



Paulette Burford



Jay Rihihiuoma



Roger Butterfield



Shorta Ranks



Michelle Kromer



Dee-Ah Gordon



C.A. Smith

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