

Debbie's Journal  
Haiti Trip - February 1-11, 2007

Friday, February 2 - Well, I am way behind in journaling, not having even done any journaling yet. The trip here yesterday went very smoothly. Ann Early drove some of us to Detroit in her vehicle and the others rode in the church van with Lois and Jim VanVeghel. We left GR at 2am and of course we were so excited, that none of us slept. The weather was good, which was a blessing because they were predicting snow by morning. Check-in went smoothly in Detroit and most of the bags were right at 50 lbs. Connie's was 4 lbs over, but they didn't charge her.

Dar did devotions at the airport in Detroit. She gave us each a little spiral notebook. We wrote our name on our book and then every day we are to try to write in everyone else's book. What a great idea!

We left Detroit on time and I was asleep before the plane even took off. We arrived in Miami and had about four hours to kill. Cindy was due to arrive in Miami about 30 minutes after we did so we went to find her gate. Connie and a few others waited near the gate, but she didn't arrive. Connie was very worried and started trying to call Cindy's family, but was unable to reach anyone. We were all hungry so we went to get something to eat. Afterwards we went and sat at our gate and soon Cindy arrived. Connie had been confused about her arrival time. Needless to say, Connie was very relieved, as we all were.

While sitting in Miami, we met a retired doctor named Rodrigue Mortel, who runs a school and orphanage in St. Marc. He is originally from Haiti, but now lives in Hershey, PA. He was so excited to hear we were going to Haiti to help. He told us St. Marc is only about 30 minutes from Verrettes and he was going to call Tom to see if he could stop by. He was such a cool guy, very passionate about the people of Haiti. He reminded us a lot of Pastor Isreal from LesCayes. He has written a book titled, I Am From Haiti, which we all want to get.

We arrived safely in Port au Prince (PaP) and things went very smoothly, even through Customs and outside the airport. God was certainly looking out for us because when the Customs agent found out we were bringing meds to give away, he let us all through without checking bags. When we got outside, Nora and Tom were there to direct us to the person helping with the luggage. It was chaotic, but not

scary like it was before. I didn't even have to say "No!" once. It was a big relief to have it go so smoothly.

After we left the airport, we drove to the Providence Guest House. (No one had to ride in the back of a pickup. Whew!) It was a very bumpy ride through the streets of Port au Prince (PaP). Wow, very hilly and very bumpy. I had forgotten how crazy they drive, honking all of the time, passing cars with oncoming traffic heading right for us, and barely squeezing past other vehicles. It was worse than Chicago!

We got to the guest house, got everything unloaded, and went to our rooms to get settled in. It was a very nice place; clean and neat, and all of the beds were already made and a fresh towel was at the foot of our bed. We then went down for dinner, which consisted of beans and rice (the best I've ever had), a chicken leg, salad, and homemade bread, possibly carrot, but not sure. Everything was delicious! The people there were very pleasant, but didn't speak much English. There was one boy, about 14, who had the absolute best smile in the world. His face lit up when he smiled. It was great to see that.

After dinner, we went up to the veranda for devotions, led by Connie. She gave us a key chain in the shape of a fish and each night she's going to give us a tag to put on it. Our word last night was "accept." We are to accept people for who they are, despite how different they are from us. The verse was Romans 15:7: "Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

We sat around and talked to Nora and Tom for a while, but we were all so exhausted from not sleeping the night before, that we were in bed by 8:30pm. I was out very quickly and only woke up once. It was actually very cool sleeping - even had to cover up with a sheet.

Today I got up and took a shower, well, sort of. It was a trickle of cold water, but at least it worked. We had to take "army" showers, which means you turn the water on to wet yourself down, turn it off and soap up, then turn it back on to quickly rinse off. Went down and had a breakfast of fresh fruit (pineapple, watermelon, and bananas), eggs, toast, and coffee. Once again, very yummy!

We then went up to the veranda and had devotions led by Cindy. She gave us the story of the silversmith and the process he takes to refine silver. He sits for hours holding the silver over the hottest part of the flame, the whole time watching it to see when it's done and making sure it doesn't burn. He knows it's done when he can see his reflection in it. She related it to how Christ watches us to make sure we don't get "burned" and he wants to see His reflection in each of us. She then shared the prayer that starts out, "Lord, help us to remember that the young woman who just cut us off on the highway is a single mom who has worked an eight hour shift and is hurrying home to get dinner on the table for her children." The whole thing was very moving.

We then walked next door to the orphanage for handicapped children, called Notre Maison, meaning House of God. The first thing we saw when we walked in was a physical therapy room with very old equipment, some of which was made from other things they had in the house. For instance, the weights at the bottom of strings were stuffed animals. The room, however, was painted very cute, with paintings of children and cartoon characters on the walls. We went upstairs to where the children were and oh my, what a moving experience that was. Most of the children we first saw were in wheelchairs. Two of them had water on the brain and couldn't hold their heads up because of the weight. One boy just made me want to cry - he had flies on his mouth and face. I kept shooing them away and he would just look at me with kind of a blank stare. Some of the children were afraid when you touched them. One mentally impaired boy had a balloon and he loved that. We then went to the school room where other children were. We met Katrine, who is about 14 and can't speak. However, she sings hymns beautifully and sang "How Great Thou Art" in Creole. What a precious thing. When we went back down where we were, the children were having some music therapy. Some of them really loved the music. The boy with the flies on his mouth got the biggest smile on his face when we were dancing around. It was a great sight to see. We also went up to the roof and could see out over the city. What a view! Tom told us it costs \$10-12k/month to run the orphanage and they're only bringing in about \$7-8k. The woman who runs it is the same woman who runs the guest house.

We went back to the guest house and packed up our stuff to go to Verrettes. We went in a big school bus, which was all painted up like the tap-tap buses. John Rune (JR) is our interpreter and will stay in the guesthouse in Verrettes with us for the week. He started out on the bus, but ended up getting off because he had to go pick up his license, which was at the police department. It took us about 3.5 hours

to get there, but we rode all along the Caribbean coast. Parts of it were beautiful. The water was gorgeous! The ride was very bumpy in some spots, but smooth most of the way. We got to the guest house and got settled in. We had time to sit and chat for a while and just relax. We met Lovely, Limene (Tom's daughter), Jolahn (Ficilta's sister), Linda (Jolahn's friend), and Fonya (Ficilta's friend). Beautiful young ladies, gorgeous! It was soon time for dinner - beans and rice, potato salad with carrots and hot dogs in it, and pork. Very good meal. We had just finished dinner when we got to meet the infamous Echo. He has Down's syndrome, but is just the nicest young man with the sweetest smile and a very contagious laugh. He likes to sing and dance and praises God in prayer. Tom says that when he's working, Echo will sit for hours and work on a calculator, not understanding what he's doing. He will punch in numbers for a while, and then scribble on a piece of paper. He can't actually write words, it's just scribbles and he uses every single part of the paper. He's a stitch!

We also got to meet Aresia, a young single mom with three children - Magdella age 12, Darline age 7, and Donald age 2. She looks like a child herself. She works so hard to provide for her family. She buys cooking oil and kerosene in large quantities and then sells it at the market in smaller quantities. Tom loaned her money so she could start her own business. She's doing very well. We will see her tomorrow at the market.

We then had devotions with Connie. The word today is "serve." We are to do things to serve others, not for our own glory. The Bible verse was Gal. 5:13, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only (do) not (turn) your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another." We then just kind of debriefed and talked about the day. We sat around and talked, journaled, etc. I wrote in everyone's notebook and it's now time to say goodnight and hit the sack. I think I'm the last one to do so. Thank you Lord for a great day!

Saturday, February 3 - Wow! What a day! We got up, took a shower in a small trickle of water, and then had granola bars and pbj on bread. Tom came and took half of the group to the literacy teacher's meeting and then came back for the rest. His truck won't hold all of us. The teachers told us some of the things they need, like food and school supplies. Some of the students haven't eaten when they come to class. There are 17 districts, many of which are way up in the mountains. The supervisors split up the district and each visit a district almost every day so that each district is visited once a week. For some districts it takes the

supervisor all day to get up the mountain and back again. They have to go up by horseback and they really would like a vehicle to use so they could visit them more often.

We left there and went up the small mountain to the tree nursery. We were supposed to help the children plant banana trees, but since Tom was unable to get the permit that allowed us to bring them into the country, we weren't able to do it. Instead, we played and sang with the children. They love to have their pictures taken and then look at them on the digital camera. We sang songs with them. Carolyn was awesome with the children, getting them to sing "Jesus Loves Me" very loudly. It was a bit of a walk downhill, and it was very rocky and uneven. We really enjoyed our time there, but I must admit I was very warm. We had to climb up the hill and then JR took the first group back and the rest of us waited. It was very hot, at least 100 according to Peg's thermometer. We finally started walking down the very rocky mountain road that led to the creek. As soon as we arrived at the creek, JR returned to get us. Ahhh, what a relief, to be able to sit down and be in the a/c! It was a pleasant ride back to the guest house, where we were fed lunch of ham and cheese sandwiches, left over beans and rice, and chips and salsa. We sat for a bit and then everyone except Carolyn and I went next door to an orphanage for children with AIDS or born to women with AIDS. It was called the Comfort House, run by Trisha and Ray Comfort. Their website is [www.haiticomfort.org](http://www.haiticomfort.org). On the way back, they stopped to see a man who made sandals. Several of the ladies ordered them. He even showed them the hide he was drying out.

Carolyn and I stayed back and worked on VBS stuff and we will get to go to the orphanage later in the week. After a while, Tom called and said to meet them at the end of the driveway so we could go see the lady who embroiders. We stopped at her shop. But there was a nun there from France helping her with some book work and she didn't have much at the store. The nun came out and talked to us, but she only spoke French. It was very funny because she just went on and on and I couldn't understand a word she said. The woman owner got in the truck and she took us to her house to show us some of her work. It was beautiful; skirts, shirts, jumpers, aprons, napkins, girl's dresses, and bags. Several ladies bought stuff and some of it has to be made yet. We then went home to have dinner, which was chicken, dark beans and rice, an eggplant dish, salad, tomatoes, beets, and fresh squeezed OJ. Yum, yum! We then sat around and chatted a bit and then Arecia, the single mom we met yesterday, came by with her three children. They were

adorable. Little Donald was very small, but his belly was very distended. He sat on my lap for a while. Magdella and Darline were beautiful young girls. Arecia isn't sure how old any of them are, but we know they are tiny for their ages. We gave each of them at least two outfits. Arecia was so appreciative. She's working so hard to make a better life for her children. They each put one of the outfits on and we took their pictures. They were so proud! After they left we sat and talked for a while. Tom told us of some of his incredible experiences. What an amazing man! He absolutely loves the children and they adore him. It's really something to watch. I went in and took a shower and the lights went out; fortunately just before I got in. So I went back and got my flashlight. It felt heavenly and was even a steady stream. I got ready for bed, planned my devotion for morning, am writing this and will go to bed. I have so much to be thankful for! The people here have nothing and yet they continue to smile. We can all learn from them. Thank you Father, for giving me this experience. Help me to smile even when the going gets tough! Amen!

Sunday, February 4 - Got up at 6:15am, thought it was later. A few were up so I sat and talked. I nibbled on granola bars and nuts. Tom came about 7am to take Sue to his house to use his wireless internet. He asked if anyone wanted to go and send an email. I said I did and so did Denise. Tom's house is very nice. Denise sent her email and Sue got the one out for the church's website. I wrote quite a lengthy one and when I went to send it, the signal had been lost. I was so bummed because I was feeling like I was more connected to the loves of my life. We're going to try again later. We went back and picked everyone else up and went to church (Pastor St. Phillip's church) in town. It had started about 6am so it was well under way when we got there about 8:30am. They asked us to sing so we sang "How Great Thou Art." Echo joined us for the last verse and he out sang all of us. The music was very peppy. Then a visiting pastor preached about faith. JR periodically told us what he was saying. The service finished shortly after 10am. After church we gave away a few ties and hankies, which they loved. We got to hold some of the children and of course take pictures. We walked back over very rocky roads in some places. It was interesting to be right in with the people. We would hear people yelling, "Blanc! Blanc!" because the white people were walking down the street. It was very warm, but a fairly short walk. We got back and it was only 10:30am. Some people took naps, Carolyn and I ended up talking to Tom quite a bit. He talked about his marriage to Ficitla and how she doesn't want to do any missionary work unless she gets paid. She has stopped going to church and reading her Bible. He thinks it may be because the pastor she really loved and trusted

ended up to be a crook and he took money from them. He doesn't know for sure because she won't talk about it. He said Limene talks to him more and a deeper conversation than Ficilita. Ficilita wants Tom to get her pregnant, but he won't until she gets healthy. I feel bad for him because he wants a wife who supports what he does.

We had lunch; crackers, Swiss cheese, ham, turkey, and fresh pineapple. We are now on our way to the mountain village of Vielot, which is where Ficilita is from. More later.

What an amazing experience! First of all the ride up there was unlike any other. Very rocky and bumpy and yet people were walking up barefooted. I don't know how they do it. We got to the village, Ficilita's village, and we parked in front of her house. Her grandmother was sitting out front weaving strips about 3" wide. She will make it into a mattress. A twin size sells for about \$1.25 and a full size sells for \$2.50-\$3. They sell them at the market. Ficilita's grandmother is about 82 and just so sweet. The view from the house was beautiful. It looked out over the mountains. There was a pig and probably 8-10 piglets laying there. We then took the VBS stuff down a few buildings to the church. Tom told the kids that had arrived to go get their siblings and friends, as they didn't know we were going to be there. JR took the truck back to get the rest of the group. While we were waiting (Carolyn, Lucy, Denise and me), we held children. The first little girl that came to me was named Deborah. Of course, we became fast friends and she stayed with me most all the time. When the others came we started the VBS. JR started explaining what we were going to do and Deborah started squabbling with the bigger boys. She was unhappy about something and let them know it. You go girl! Anyhow, we did the Bible story of the lost sheep and then gave each of them a marker and two papers to color. They didn't know what to do with it; they had to be shown. They loved it and fought over the markers because we didn't have quite enough. When they finished that, they made sheep out of cardboard cutouts, fiberfill, and clothespins. Then we taught them the game of sheep, sheep, wolf, like duck, duck, goose. They caught on quicker than I thought they would. They absolutely loved it, which made me feel really good. When we were done with that, we handed out neckties and hankies and almost started a riot. JR was able to get the boys under control and had them line up to receive one. The hankies given to the women and older girls went much smoother. They didn't fight over them. We concluded by singing "Jesus Loves Me" with them, which fortunately, the pastor helped us with. Then it took us a bit to get all of us ready to go as some went up to

see Ficitla's house. While I was waiting, a boy rode up on a horse and stood a little ways from me. I asked "Foto?" and at first he said no, then he said yes. After I took his picture, he asked for money and I told him no. I got a very dirty look. Everyone was finally ready to leave, but we couldn't fit everyone in the truck because the shocks were shot. So six people started walking and three of us rode. It was a very bumpy ride home, worse than on the way up. We got home and Tom went back for the others. He wasn't gone long because the group had made it all the way down the mountain. Wow! We had supper - Haitian mac and cheese and watermelon. I helped squeeze the juice and I have a whole new appreciation for it. It was pumelo juice, which is like a better tasting grapefruit. Lovely cut them in half and cut the edges off and then I had to squeeze them by hand. It was very hard, especially with the arthritis in my thumb. It took me a while, but I finally figured out how best to do it. I felt like I was wasting a lot of the fruit, but Lovely said I was doing okay. We then sat and talked and sang some hymns. Jolahn, Lovely, Ficitla, and Limene sang for us too. They all have good voices. They left and it was time for bed. Dar, Denise, and I sat and talked a while and then I finally decided to go to sleep. So I thought. I was quite warm and I couldn't sleep. There were fireflies in our room and I thought they were laser pointers because I heard rustling outside. Denise heard it too, but we finally concluded it was an animal and what we were seeing were fireflies. Too funny! It seemed forever, but I finally drifted off to sleep.

Monday, February 5 - The truck is in for repairs, so we had to cancel morning plans. Lovely showed us how to make oatmeal the Haitian way, with about 3-4 whole anise and a long part of a cinnamon stick. After she got the oatmeal and water into a pan, she made a paste out of 2 (heaping) T of powdered milk and water, and put it in the oatmeal. She let it boil quite a while until it was thick. Then at the last minute she added a cap full of (Haitian) almond extract. It was very yummy! Then we cleaned and mopped the house.

Some of the ladies went to the sandal maker so they could pay for half of the shoes they ordered and Carolyn ordered some. We went back and rested, read, etc. and waited for the others to return from Tom's property. A boy about 12-13 kept coming up to the window and holding out his hand and saying, "Give me." At first I told him "no!", then I just ignored him. Tom said not to feed any of them because the next day we will have 100 wanting food. It's hard because you know they are hungry, but you can't possibly meet all of the need. The others came back



and we had crackers, turkey, cheese, chips, and watermelon. Connie has an intestinal problem so she is in bed.

A group then left for the orphanage next door and the rest of us went up the mountain to TeRouj to see a literacy class and to give away stuff. This area was even more rustic and poor than Vielot, where we went yesterday. The "road" was a trail and at one point it went what seemed like straight up. Parts of it were very rocky, but other parts were like a two track. The literacy class was in a small hut up the hill. We watched for a while and they sang us a song to welcome us. They did some math and reading. There were a few small children there. One woman breast fed two toddlers at the same time. I'm not even sure they were both hers. We gave them ties and hankies and then JR told the others to get their children and meet us under the big tree. We gave out more ties and hankies and then gave all of the children a bracelet to make. When that was done, we gave them fruit snacks and a small Frisbee. They loved it! These were definitely the poorest of the poor! The ride back was quicker than the ride there because it was downhill.

Dinner was some sort of fish. It was not very appealing because they cooked it with everything but the scales. All that was left when I got there were the heads. I couldn't dip into the juice because I was afraid I would get the guts too. Dar gave me some of hers because she took too much. There was a salsa type of stuff to go on top of it. Ooohee, it was hot! We also had salad and guacamole that Denise made. It was very good and didn't have any mayo in it. It was made from one huge avocado, the pit of which was bigger than the whole avocados we get at home. I sure wish I could take some of them back! There was enough guacamole for all of us, just from that one avocado. It's interesting, we haven't once had dessert and I haven't even missed it. I hope that keeps up, although I have to say, a bowl of ice cream sure sounds good!

After supper, we went to see where Tom was showing the "Jesus" video. It ended up to be along side the road, maybe two miles outside of Verrettes. Tom started out showing two general videos just to get their attention, and then he showed the "Jesus" video. He estimated there to be approximately 300 people there. They were crammed together to be able to see and hear, sitting on vehicles and even the roof of a house. We were standing with Tom a ways out from the rest. Tom ended up having us move because he didn't like how the guys behind us were talking. They didn't know he could speak Creole. So we moved behind the screen, which was in front of our truck. Two guys came and stood behind us and kept watching us. JR

was with us and we told him we were uncomfortable with the situation so he went and told Tom we were leaving. We left a backpack full of ties and some hankies for the pastors to distribute. We came back, some showered, and then Sue, Denise, Dar, and I played euchre. Denise quit partway through so she could learn some more Creole from JR, and Lucy took her place. Dar and I won both games. I'm now sitting on my bed, ready to sign off for tonight. I don't think I'll have any trouble sleeping tonight! Thank you Jesus, for an awesome day!

Tuesday, February 6 - Slept pretty well, but woke up in the night and the power was off. It was a little warm. Laid awake a while and then heard JR's phone ring. Fortunately, he then got up and restarted the generator and we had fans again. I actually slept until 7:40am. Got up, had some crackers with peanut butter and a granola bar. Talked a while, got dressed, and then did devotions. Denise told us we have a very large mouse/small rat in our bathroom. Oh great! Geckos, bugs, and now a mouse/rat. I can handle all of these as long as there are no snakes!

We got ready to walk into town. Tom went to his house to make bread and pizza dough while JR walked us through town. We saw the police station (from the outside), the dry cleaners, a garden, a kindergarten school, the library (which was closed), a book store, a secondary school, Echo's house and parents, the water filtration store, we met JR's grandmother, who was selling bread, candy, and other things on the street, and then stopped at another book store. Six of us were tired and walked back with Echo. Connie was very sick yesterday with diarrhea and is quite weak, so she needed to get back. It was very warm and we got back and had no way to get in the house. We sent Echo back to Tom's to get the key. He finally showed up and we were able to get in.

Lunch was homemade bread from Tom and PBJ or butter to go on it. We took some chairs and sat outside because it was so hot in the house without the generator to run the fans. Some people went to Tom's house because they hadn't seen it yet. Others laid down. When Tom came back, he took three to his house to do emails and to help make pizza dough. The rest of us went to see a spring and then go to the tree nursery to help kids plant. However, they weren't ready for us at the tree nursery because last night, the covering for it was burned by a neighbor trying to burn off all of the dead brush and a new covering for it had to be made. They finished in time, but Jeremie hadn't made it back from PaP with the bags they used. So instead, we pulled the truck over on a street in Verrettes and we did the story of Zaccheus, narrated by JR. JR does such a great job with it. He really

kept their attention. We started out with about 35 kids. After the story, we sang the Zaccheus song. Even though the kids didn't know the words, they tried to sing it and did the motions. It was really cute. We then handed out the bracelet kits assembled by Jill and the kids. We demonstrated how to put them together, but had to help a lot of the kids, especially the little ones. They loved their bracelets. We noticed that the size of the group had grown to at least 100 children. We handed out stickers, but it was just becoming too difficult to tell who had gotten them and we were running out. We decided to forego passing out suckers because we were afraid it would cause a riot, so we got in the truck and drove off, I'm sure leaving some kids without anything, but we had to do it. I felt bad. However, not all was lost. Peggy, Dar, and Connie, who were in the back of the truck, started throwing suckers at kids as we passed them. At first they were afraid, but then Connie asked JR how to say candy in Creole. Once they figured it out, they were running to keep up with the truck to get more. It was so funny - like being in a parade.

We got to Tom's house and the pizza dough wasn't done rising. Everyone except Sue and me went back to the guest house. Sue was downloading pictures and I got to read emails from Steph and Steve. They said the actual temp was -18 and the wind chill was -35. Plus they got lots of snow. We realized we could have a 100 degree temperature difference between when we leave Haiti and when we get home. Hopefully none of our flights will be delayed or cancelled.

We went back to the guest house and started making pizza. I assembled some of them and helped cut and serve them. They were very good, especially with the homemade dough.

After dinner Tom returned from getting ice and some of the ladies cleaned out the cooler and sanitized it. It smelled bad and we had to throw some of the food away. Not very many of the people in Haiti have refrigeration. I don't understand how they live without it.

It was time for devotions. The words tonight were "confess" and "forgive." We sat and talked for a while, kind of a debriefing for the day and gave the new people some advice about what to expect when we return home. It was then time for showers and bed.

Thank you Father, for an awesome day and for showing us the every day life of the Haitian people. We have a lot to be thankful for!

Wednesday, February 7 - The day started with breakfast of PBJ on Tom's homemade bread, fresh oranges, and any of the other stuff we brought with us. I noticed last night that my shampoo and other stuff that was on the sill in the shower were gone. When we talked about it this morning, we realized that the window had been opened yesterday to let a bee out and someone reached in and took it. It made us feel better when we realized it was someone from the outside that took it.

Devotions were conducted by Carolyn and then Tom gave us our itinerary for the day. We took the meds to Tom's house and sorted through them. He will then take them to the clinic in Verrettes. Sister Judy came over and took a few of the meds with her. She was thrilled and so appreciative of what we brought with us.

We left there and walked to the market. Wow, what chaos! People by the hundreds crammed close together, many yelling out what they were selling. It was laid out kind of like Meijers - the meats in one section, vegetables, clothes, etc. One of the first places we stopped was to buy straw hats. We moved on and saw fish that looked to be smoked, but not sure. There was meat laying in the open, more fish, beans, new clothing, used clothing, rice, oil, extracts, and just about anything you would want. It was so incredibly hot that four of us walked back to Tom's with Echo as our protector. Ficitla was kind enough to bring out a fan for us. The others got back and some went next door and bought cold Coke and Sprite. Ooh baby, that tasted great! We left Tom's and went back to the guest house. Tom bought some small bananas and they were SO good; very flavorful. Tom also brought back the ingredients to make a chocolate cake for us. We napped for a while (such wimps, we are) and then went to another orphanage further down the road, about 3-4 miles away. It was called "Hands Across The Sea" (HATS) and is run by a Canadian woman named Karen. What a woman of God she is! She has 12 children right now, plus she has a school next door. She took this property, which was a lot of rock and mud and a partially completed building, and in three years she has been able to clean it up, complete the building where the children and a full time care taker live, plus build a 2½ story house for her and a place for team members to stay, plus complete a school, and in December, a team built the structure of a church - all within three years. And the love she has for the children is evident. A two year old boy named Alex lives with her. He was a premie

and only weighed 3 pounds when he was born. He has no muscle tone, can't sit up or crawl, but he understands her. She firmly feels that by God's grace he will one day walk and talk, and will be spreading God's word. She refuses to believe anything different. We gave them little rubber fish and turtles that you fill with water and squirt each other with. They loved them and a loved being squirted. The older children came over during recess (4 of them) and sang "I've Got the Joy" for us in both English and Creole. They even harmonized. It was soon time to leave and we left candy with Karen for them. What a great experience!

We got home and dinner was supposed to be ready at 5pm. In typical Haitian fashion, it was done at 6:30pm, but it was well worth waiting for. Beef stew with a few carrots, sweet potatoes, regular potatoes, and plantain. It was awesome! Tom had to leave right as dinner was being served so he could go set up the movies.

After dinner, while we were waiting for Tom to come back and get us, we were extremely hot because we didn't have any power. Dar went and got a large chunk of ice and passed it around and each person had to tell one thing it could be used for. We had everything from a nose picker to an ear cleaner to a weapon, and, well, I won't repeat what Carolyn's use was for it. Let's just say it turned the whole conversation around. It was so incredibly hot, we were losing our minds. ☺ Tom finally came back for us and we went to where the movie was. He showed it against a cement wall next to an open field. There were several hundred people there. The first movie was African music and dancing and the second movie was about a voodoo family who became Christians. What a great way to spread the Good News! We stayed through about half of the second movie and then came back and enjoyed Tom's cake. It was very good even without frosting. It was very moist. We continued sweating until JR came back with the generator. What a relief to have the fans running again. It was then time for showers and bed, and the conclusion to another God-given day.

Thursday, February 8 - Arise and shine at 6:45am. I didn't hear any rat reports this morning. Ate yet another granola bar, had a cup of coffee, and enjoyed the a.m. Tom arrived at 8am to take the rest of us to see his property. I love riding through town and waving at people and greeting them. We arrived to a site just below their property and had to climb a little to see it - not bad, but rocky with what looked to be dead corn stalks lying around. I caught my foot on one and almost did a nose dive, but recovered okay - about 6.8 out of 10. ☺ We got up to a small flat area and looked out. Wow, what an amazing view! A picture painted by

God, just for us. The rocky hills around us, the green valley and various mountains in the distance, some so high up that they looked like clouds. He has an awesome vision for the property; a house, a guest house, possibly a seminary some day, and a house for JR, to be the "gate keeper." He wants to use natural borders rather than put up a wall because it's much cheaper and more environmentally friendly.

We came back and Dr. Rodrigue Mortel, the man from St. Marc that we met at the airport in Miami, was there along with three American men friends from PA. We visited them for a while and Tom made a great connection with them because they have a lot of power tools that were donated and they told Tom he could borrow them whenever he needed them. He was thrilled with that! After they left, we had devotions and then went to the gift shop at Albert Schweitzer Hospital. Dar was foaming at the mouth the whole way there. She did her share of contributing to the local economy, but I think she met her match. Lucy may have even passed her on this shopping trip. I bought a basket and two hot pads, for a total of \$8. Tom took us past the entrance to the hospital. There was a sign up as to how much it cost to be seen - 50 goudes for people in their area (about \$1.25) and 1,000 goudes for people out of the area (about \$25). Tom said the hospital is in trouble financially because of bad management and they have had to let go of about 150 staff. They went from having >200 beds to having 60 beds. We came back and had PBJ on crackers, cheese, and an ice cold Coke! We put on our hats and had our pictures taken, along with Limene, Linda, and Lovely. It was then time for a siesta. At 2:00pm those who hadn't been to TeRouj went up to see the literacy class. The rest of us rested, cleaned, etc.

Aresia came over this afternoon with her three children. She tried giving Donald to Darlene because she doesn't have enough money to feed all of the children. We decided that if we collected \$150 (total) amongst all of us, that would pay for her rent for one year (\$80), buy beans and other seeds to plant her crops and pay someone to help her till the garden and plant (\$30), and then she'll have enough money left to sustain her and the children until the crops can be harvested and she earns money to keep the process going. Tom is going to start out giving her the \$30 for seeds and labor and gradually give her money because her family will take it from her if they know she's getting it from Tom.

About 5:00pm Pastor St. Phillip called and reminded Tom about a women's group that was meeting at the church. He wanted us to pay a visit to them so some of us did. We handed out hankies and they asked us to sing a song and have someone

pray in English. I was asked to do the prayer. They sang a song for us and then we had to leave because it was almost time for dinner.

We got back home and it wasn't long until we had dinner, which was pork, pasta salad, cooked carrots, and fruit salad. Once again, dinner was great! While we ate we watched "The Sound of Music," which was great fun. We all sang the songs and Limene loves the movie and really got into parts of it, especially the puppet show. She was very animated with that one. We had to cut the movie short though because Tom and family had to go. We then had devotions and it was time for showers and bed. Another great day in Haiti!

Friday, February 9 - What a morning! Woke up to find that the generator quit, the toilet in Connie and Cindy's bathroom had overflowed, and our toilet wasn't getting enough water to flush. Breakfast was another granola bar, but at least I had something to eat, unlike many people here who have nothing. Tom came and we walked to the clinic where Tom was going to take the medicines that were donated. We met a Cuban doctor and lab tech, both women, who were so happy to have the meds. There was also a man from the Dominican who was here with his father who is working on a road project in Gonaeve. His father is coming to pick him up shortly and they will take some of the meds to St. Marc while on their way back to the Dominican. Tom made sure they understood that the meds are to be given away, not sold. While we were there, three people came with a two month old baby who looked very sick. The poor thing was so tiny; she looked like she was about 6-7 pounds. Her coloring wasn't very good and her breathing was labored. As we were getting ready to leave, one of the doctors called them in to look at her. We had given them some baby vitamins so I'm hoping they could get her strong enough that she would survive.

Some walked back and some rode. I rode back and it was discovered that no one had a key. Tom went to Lovely's school because she had one last night. She thought it was in the pocket of her clothes she had on last night, but it wasn't there. We went back to Tom's house and he looked all over for it. There were two keys and neither one could be found. Lucy and I went next door and got Coke and ice to bring back. Tom got a call from JR saying that he found the owner's wife who happened to be in town from PaP and she had a key, so they were able to get in. Lunch was PBJ on crackers, some Haitian tortilla looking things and a Haitian dish that Ficitla made. It had a strong fishy taste to it, not something I enjoyed at all.

It was then time to start cleaning up and packing up to get ready to leave tomorrow. I must say, I'm ready to go home. The heat is getting to me. Obenus has a clinic appointment at 2:00pm so Connie and Dar went with him. He has been sick for quite a while and is so very thin. Tom isn't feeling well either. He has a real bad sinus headache and is feeling congested. He's lying down, but probably will get up soon as we are going to the tree nursery to help the children plant.

An elderly woman from Pastor St. Phillip's church stopped by with one of Pastor's sons. She is a single woman, never married and has no family. The church supports her, but she often has no food. Tom asked if it was okay to give her some of Arresia's money. Those of us that were here said it was fine so he gave her \$50, which he said will help her a lot. She had also cut her finger getting off the tap-tap bus, so Cindy took her in the bathroom and washed both of her hands; put ointment on the cut and a bandaid. She was such a sweet lady and very appreciative. Pastor's son said he would help her and guard her money until she gets home. JR took her to the clinic and brought Obenus back. He has worms, is malnourished, is anemic, and is dehydrated. He got two kinds of pills and Tom is going to make sure he gets vitamins with iron in them.

Sue, Denise, and I went with Tom, JR, Obenus, and Echo up to the tree nursery to work with the kids. What an awesome sight to see. We're coming up the hill and the kids come running out yelling, "Tom, Tom!" There were dozens of them and they swarmed the truck when we parked. We brought oranges and pumelos with us to let the people eat them and then save the seeds to plant them. The kids were all given small black plastic bags to fill with dirt and then plant their seeds in them. They loved the fruit! Eric told all of the kids to sit quietly for a story and whoever listened well would get a sucker. Well, that sure did the trick! They were very good listeners and Denise read the story of Zaccheus while JR interpreted. The kids loved the story! We then did the Zaccheus song which, even though they couldn't understand the words, they did the motions, and some even tried to sing along. We concluded with suckers, which we were afraid we wouldn't have enough, but we had about ten left over. It was like the feeding of the 5,000. We all left and went up to the truck, but Tom stayed and helped serve watermelon. He talked about a little boy that he knew who needed as much nourishment as possible, so he gave him a piece of watermelon. Kids then surrounded Tom and he was handing out watermelon like crazy. The kids cleared and here stood this little boy with



watermelon juice running all down his head and shoulders. Tom said the boy was trying to make his tongue reach his face. Tom said it was hysterical. Our visit there ended, with children running after the truck, some coming all the way down to the stream. What a rush! It was by far my favorite part of the trip!

We got home and soon dinner was ready. We had pork, beans and rice, and potato salad. Once again, very yummy, thanks to Lovely. After dinner the people who had bought stuff from the embroidery lady walked to her house to get their stuff. I took a shower and then went and started dishes. Lucy came back and offered to wash if I dried. Cindy helped dry too.

We then had devotions, talked and sang for a bit, and then went in to finish packing and getting ready for bed. Tomorrow is a day at the beach and then on to PaP. I can't wait! What a great way to end our time in Verrettes. The time at the tree nursery with the children was a perfect way to end! Thank you Father!

Saturday, February 10 - Got up early, about 6:30am and finished getting everything packed and taken out to the living room. Tom was due at 7:30am, but arrived at 7:05am very upset. Ficulita was threatening to come and tell us lies about Tom sleeping with Limene because she was mad at Tom for intercepting a letter from her brother in which he asked for help with school. Tom locked the gate so she couldn't get out, and then he went and told Sister Judy because Ficulita also threatened to go to her. Sister Judy said she would talk to Ficulita and so did Lovely. Tom wanted to leave ASAP because she threatened to also go to the police. So we prayed for them and then Tom went to see if he could find Eric to have him ask the bus driver to come early. Just before he left Ficulita called and said she wanted to apologize. She has NEVER apologized for anything; this is the first time. Our prayers were answered.

While Tom was gone, I spotted the biggest spider I have ever seen, other than a tarantula. It had very long skinny legs with a rather small body. It was u-g-l-y! After about ten minutes, it crawled out the window in the top of the house.

We waited for Tom and he wasn't coming back. We were getting worried so we prayed again. Pretty soon he showed up and said everything was fine. Ficulita apologized, and everyone was going with us to the beach. Tom went to thank Sister Judy for her help and she said she hadn't even had time to go talk to Ficulita. God had softened her heart. Praise God, He is SO good!! So we loaded everything up,

said goodbye to Obenus and took off for the beach. It was about a two hour drive and when we got to our destination, there were several buses already there. Tom said he'd never seen so many people there. He went up to find out if we would be able to get tables and he was told there were 800 people coming. We promptly turned around and drove about 30 minutes to Wahoo Bay. It was a nice resort with a sandy beach and a pool. We ordered our drinks and food right away and then went down to the beach. It was awesome! So refreshing and beautiful. Right away people came up and tried to sell us things, like a boat ride, hats, jewelry, and artwork. I went out in the water and . . . ahhhh! We swam for a bit and then I got my mask and snorkel out. The only thing I saw were two starfish. Not really worth bringing the equipment for, but oh well. Then it was time to eat so we went up to the restaurant area. I had garlic shrimp with French fries, fried plantain, beans and rice, a cole slaw type dish, and homemade bread. It was delicious! We were so excited because they had ice cream on the menu, but when we tried to order it, they said they were all out of it. Bummer! After dinner we went to the pool and swam for a while. It too was very refreshing, but there were a lot of bugs in it. We showered and changed into our clothes to get ready to head to PaP. It was now time for the unpleasant task of saying goodbye to Echo, Eric, and all of the girls except Ficilta. I hated to see them go. They're such awesome young men and women. But we had to do it, and then we continued on to Port. It took us about one hour or so and soon we were back to Providence Guest House. We applauded our bus driver and then unloaded everything. The metal artist was waiting for us. I had ordered and paid for an angel and sun and moon. By the time I got up there, he didn't have either. Peg let me take her angel because it wasn't like the one she ordered. I then ended up picking out a metal vase-type thing that I'll either use for pens or give to someone. We came in for dinner, which was beef, beans, rice, salad, and lemon cake. It was good, but I'm ready for a burger! It's now time to repack, shower, and get ready to leave for home in the a.m.

After getting ready for bed I went upstairs to sit on the veranda to cool off. We ended up talking to two American doctors who had been doing health care for three weeks in the mountains of Haiti. They had some very interesting stories to tell. One of them saw a set of twins that had been born premature. They were three months old and were only about 5-6 pounds each. He couldn't believe they had even survived. He said they were dehydrated, malnourished, had worms, and scabies. He treated them and told the mother to bring them back in a few days. He gave her vitamins to give to them. He said the mom was also very sick, very

anemic. By the time they left, one of the twins was doing better, but still quite sick. He wasn't sure the other one would survive. They treated lots of people for worms and scabies, saw some TB and malaria and some other diseases. When they came back to Port, they had all of their stuff in the back of a pickup and then they stood on the back and held on for the three hour ride. They said it was a great way to see Haiti because you could look every way and see something. We also met three American women, one of whom has been in Haiti for four months. She is with "Doctors Without Borders" and will be there until June. She's a RN and works at the hospital, but also travels around Haiti sometimes to work in other areas. The other two are friends of hers there to visit her.

The daughter of the owner of the guest house is named Rosie. She's 8 years old and very smart. She speaks Creole, French, and English and is such a cutie.

While we were out on the veranda talking to the doctors, it started to rain. That's the first rain we've seen in Haiti. It not only rained, it poured very hard for quite a long time. It was still pouring when I went to bed, but it was so relaxing to hear the rain.

Sunday, February 11 - We're headed home! Woke up about 6am, got dressed, finished packing, and ate breakfast, which was cereal, fresh fruit, and toast. That's the last of the yummy fruit. We had time to talk, and then it was time to load up the trucks. We had prayer time before heading to the airport. Once at the airport, it was time to say goodbye to Ficilta, Tom, and JR. Things actually went quite smoothly in the airport. Several of us were concerned about the weight of our bags being over, but they didn't even seem to look at the weight. Cindy was the only trouble maker in the group. She got up to the counter and was told her seat had been given away because she was a no-show on the flight from Chicago to Miami. Fortunately she had her boarding pass to prove she was on the flight. She was supposed to be on a flight to Miami and we were going to Ft. Lauderdale, but because of the mix-up, she got on our flight so we got to see her a little bit longer. Something good came of it!

While at the airport in PaP, I bought seven bags of coffee, a box of rum (5 bottles), a big bottle of vanilla, and a nativity set for Steph made from a coconut. It is so cute! They had to keep the liquid stuff that we bought and give it to us when we got on the plane. After we got on the plane, they made an announcement to make sure everyone knew that once we got through Customs in Ft. Lauderdale, all of the liquids would have to be put in our checked baggage. I have NO room! Fortunately, Denise said she would take some of the stuff from my suitcase and

put it in hers so I could get the vanilla and rum in my checked bag. The flight to Ft. Lauderdale was beautiful; flying over the Caribbean and Atlantic was gorgeous, with all different colors of blue and green water and beautiful sandy beaches. It looked like paradise.

We arrived safely in Ft. Lauderdale and Customs went quite quickly and smoothly. While we were waiting for our luggage to come off the carousel, I saw one of Dar's suitcases, so I pulled it off. It had something very sticky all over the outside of it. Whatever it was didn't come from her bag, but from someone else's bag. There was so much luggage on the belt that once it got to the carousel, it was just crunching everything. You could literally hear stuff breaking. I was very nervous about putting the liquids in my suitcase, but I just tried to pack clothes all around it. It was very heavy and I thought sure they would say it was over weight, but they didn't.

We had to go to another terminal to catch our flight to Dallas. We had just enough time to get over there, recheck our bags, say goodbye to Cindy, get through the screening, and get to our gate. We were only at the gate about ten minutes when they started to board.

The flight to Dallas was uneventful. We didn't have much time to make it to our last gate, which was on the other side of the airport. Fortunately they have a tram system so we had to walk a little ways and then catch the tram. It was much easier than walking that distance. By the time we got to our gate, they were starting to board. We barely had time to go to the bathroom. This is the last leg of our journey and I'm very excited to get home and see Steph! I'm not anxious to see and feel the cold though! As the plane loaded, they announced that it was a full flight and that we were actually over weight. They were going to have to figure out how to get to the proper weight, so they may have to pull some bags off. That made me a little nervous!

The flight to GR went well. We arrived in GR and we had to use the stairs to deplane. You're joking me! It's bitter cold and windy, I have no coat, I've just come from a country where it's 90 degrees, and we're walking outside to get into the airport. Welcome home! Steph was there waiting as were family members of everyone else. Lots of hugs, chattering, and then on to see what damage was done to our liquids. We waited and waited, everyone else was leaving, and Sue and I were still there. Our bags didn't arrive with us. We're guessing that ours were some of the bags they pulled off, probably because they were so heavy. So Sue and I went to report our missing luggage. Sue went first and the lady asked her to

describe her bag, which she did. She asked what some of the things were that were in it and Sue said, "Seven bottles of rum. We're just returning from a mission trip." Oh no Sue, now the lady is going to think we're Christians with a drinking problem. When it was my turn, she asked the same questions, and what do I say? "Five bottles of rum." I thought it would be an easy way to identify my bag. The woman had a good sense of humor and she just laughed. I'm sure she's heard it all.

Steph and I took Carolyn home and then it was home for us too. I am so incredibly blessed to have had this opportunity to serve a few of the people in Haiti and to serve my Lord. This was definitely a trip I was meant to take, but it certainly could not have happened without the support of a lot of other people. I thank God for giving me this chance to spread His love and His word to the less fortunate. I hope I made a difference, but I must say they blessed me more than I blessed them. The Haitians are beautiful people who are very proud of what they've been given and have no idea what they don't have. I am a different person because of them.

I'm happy to report that my bag arrived about 5pm the next day. I was very afraid to open it and was relieved to see that it didn't appear to be wet. However, I was expecting the worst when I opened it. To my surprise, all of the bottles were intact, not one break, crack, or leak. Thank you Jesus!

One month later - Now that I've had time to get back into the fast pace of the US, I miss the easy pace of Haiti. It's so hard not to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life as we know it. It's easy to forget that people in Haiti don't have all of the luxuries we have. I can do my laundry whenever I want, I can get something cold out of the refrigerator, I can turn the lights on when I need to, I can easily get from one place to another, I never go hungry or thirsty, I can go shopping and buy what I want and what I need, I can relax in front of the TV at night, I can get water from the tap and not hike down the mountain, and the list goes on and on. It's so hard not to be complacent and allow ourselves to get caught up in our jobs, our activities, and just our every-day lives. But we can't forget, **WE MUSN'T FORGET!** We have to remember to think about those times that we looked into the eyes of a hungry child; or heard a mother say she was willing to give away her child because she couldn't afford to feed him; or see the young boy who was ill; or held the orphaned children who needed our love and support; or saw how much the children loved the missionary man. It doesn't stop here. On the contrary, it has just begun. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a

drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' Matthew 25:34-36, 40

God bless the people of Haiti!