

Trip Report

June 2017 Trip to Haiti

Disclaimer

Each book of the Old Testament was written without punctuation marks. When I am tired, which is often the case when I am in Haiti or recovering from Haiti, I use the Old Testament as my Style Guide and eliminate all punctuation. From time to time I add the word “and” to make the “sentence of the day” hold together. Judy tries to make these documents readable.

Monday, June 12, 2017

I flew from San Antonio to Miami where I met other team members from Texas and then flew to Port-au-Prince. It was a long day.

Helen Roenfeldt, Executive Director of Mission: Haiti, arrived on another plane about 30 minutes later.

We spent the night at Walls Guest House.

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

We traveled from Port-au-Prince to the Faith Lutheran Church Orphanage in Gonaives.

GPS N 19⁰ 26.334' W 072⁰ 40.622'

Candice Dominguez Girls' Dorm Inspection

While the others played with the children, I inspected the Candace Dominguez Girls' Dorm. Scott Peters had added doors and windows. They looked good. The outside had been whitewashed in an appropriate manner. When we left in March, we had left instructions for a skim coat of plaster to be applied to the inside. It was applied from the floor up to about 6 feet. Above that nothing was done. That lower 6 feet was also whitewashed, even though the entire inside



was supposed to be whitewashed. The vents we had installed were there. We had left screen wire to be inserted into the vents to keep the mosquitoes out. That wire was not inserted. A separate report will be written concerning the Dorm.

VBS

I went back over and joined the rest of the team. They went through a Bible lesson of Daniel in the Lions' Den. After the Bible lesson, they had paper plates with a hole cut in them, and they glued pieces of paper to simulate the lions' manes, then they practiced roaring.



After that, watercolors were brought out, paper was distributed, and each child proceeded to paint a picture. The child got to select the subject. I believe each child painted two pictures, so they could keep one and Amy Tilt could take one back to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran School.

Then they got out the parachute game. Basically, it was a parachute-shaped piece of cloth. They stood around the edge, and they used it to bounce and then catch a ball. The next part of it was to bounce the parachute up, and then everybody tries to run under it and get covered with the parachute. They had a lot of fun doing this.

Then the soccer ball was brought out. There was no goal, so they improvised. One person would kick the ball, and another person would try to deflect the ball. If he did not deflect the ball, it would hit a wall and bounce back. Hannah Jacobs kicked the ball harder than the others had, so then everyone had to try to see if they could kick it still harder. I was sitting off to the side holding Son Son. We moved to a safer place to sit.

Dedication of the Dorm

We all moved over to the Candice Dominguez Girls' Dorm, everyone looked it over, and we then joined hands and Lophane Laurent led us in prayer that the Lord would use the Candice Dominguez Girls' Dorm for His purpose and that the girls who lived there would be blessed.

Royal Decameron Resort

We packed up and headed South. Our plan was to spend the night at the Royal Decameron Resort. This facility had just opened. Originally it had been a Club Med facility, and then it became the Indigo Beach Resort. Last year it was closed, rebuilt, and refurbished. Among other things, each room has a shower, and the shower usually has hot water. The controls for the shower were complicated, and the first time I used it I was wondering if I needed to wrap a towel around myself and go hunting for a staff member to show me how to turn it on. We never had a blackout.

This resort is south of San Marc. So, it took us about an hour and ½ or so to get to the resort from Gonaives. Since it was newly reopened, they were running a special. It was one of these places where one fee includes everything. The daily rate, with all food and drinks included, was less than the room rate at the other places we usually stay.

To save money, we stayed at that resort. In some cases, the driving was just a little bit more, but this is the first time I have stayed in Haiti where all week we had excellent accommodations.

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

The village name, Balagué, was spelled for me by two different people - Baladaguae and Baladague. The spelling I have chosen to use was taken from the spelling on the back of tee shirts worn by many people who were celebrating the 18th anniversary of the church.

We took the cut-off to Colminy, and very shortly we came to a fork in the road. We took the right fork, which showed much more travel than the left fork. We then drove along a road that passed through rice fields.

We passed irrigation canals, and in due time at the junction of a major irrigation canal and the river, we came to **Balagué**.

GPS N 19° 13.660' W 072° 40.314'



Wednesday Morning Church Service

As we pulled up to the church (Eglise Évangélique Luthérienne), there were 150 or so people sitting under a large mango tree. Most were sitting on the ground. There was singing going on; and while the others in the group went into the church to set up for Vacation Bible School, I joined the group under the mango tree.

This was their normal Wednesday morning service. I videoed from the bank

of the canal (edge of the group) and then moved in to the center and sat on the ground so I could shoot up at the singers and speakers. After a while a lady brought me a chair to sit in. I took it, but the angle of the shot was not quite so good.

After VBS was in progress for a while, I went inside to shoot. It was hot in there.

Inspecting the Church Building

Helen told me that the church was too small, and they wanted to expand it by moving a wall about 3 meters. She wanted me to do an inspection, so I did. An elderly lady, younger than me, joined me. She kept brushing the children off the wall who were hanging onto the windows looking in. As I took photos and examined the structure, she pointed out things to me. She did not speak English, but she understood building problems, and we could communicate well.

The church was supposed to be confined masonry, but was infill masonry. The walls and the columns were not bonded together, and they were moving in different directions. The only top beam was at the front, and it lacked the ability to hold the front of the building together. The roof was metal and had minimal overhangs (good to withstand windstorms). Normally with confined masonry, there is a column on each side of each door and the door frames are attached to those columns. In this case the front door lacked columns and the door frame was previously attached to concrete block. For the side doors, at least one of the columns was missing, and the door frame had broken loose from the concrete block.



A full report will be developed concerning the condition of the church.

Food Distribution

After VBS was over, food was given out to about 150 families. While this was going on, I was in the church with everyone else and got over-heated. Enough food was distributed to feed those families for about 10 days.

After the food was given out, we headed back to the Royal Decameron.

Thursday, June 15, 2017

We headed north to San Marc, and then north of San Marc we turned left onto the same dirt road we had followed the previous day. At a fork, we took the left fork. That is the road less taken. We followed it and took a few other forks and eventually came to the end of the road. This was **Colminy**.

GPS N 19° 10.868' W 072° 42.733'

VBS

We unloaded the VBS gear into the church. The children settled into the pews on the left and the adults into the pews on the right. One lady who could not walk was brought to the back door of the church in a wheelbarrow and then carried in.

Soon VBS was going on, and the children participated with vigor and were well-behaved. After the story of Daniel and the Lions' Den, the children made their lion masks and practiced roaring like a lion.

Adult Programs

After the VBS was over, it was time for the team to address the ladies, especially the pregnant ladies. Layettes were given to those who were expecting.

Then bracelet packets were given to the adults. The packets contained a copper wire and several beads of different colors.

The black bead represented sin.

The red bead represented the Blood of Christ.

The white bead showed that we were washed as clean as snow.

The green bead showed that we grow in our faith with the Holy Spirit.

The yellow bead represented eternal life in heaven.

The adults were then taught how to assemble the bracelets and were taught the meaning of each color of bead.

Since Hannah was not fully occupied, she picked up a young man. It was very evident that the young man was where he





wanted to be.

So, I positioned myself to take a picture of Hannah as she paced the floor carrying the young man.

Who was enjoying it more? This is how I like to see people who come to Haiti interact with the Haitians.

In the photo below, Hannah is on the left side, and she has a young man and a young lady escorting her. It is a different young man.

Visiting

After that, we walked over and met a lady who was living in a house a team had

showed up and built on the church property without asking permission to build. The lady had a knee problem and had problems getting around.

Next door was a duplex. The building might have been eight feet by sixteen feet, and it was divided roughly in half. The construction was stick framing and then it was plastered with mud. The mud was cracking and sloughing off. The roof was rusty galvanized metal. Each half was occupied by a separate family. On the left side was a lady whose husband was killed last year while guarding the community garden. They had 6 children, but her family has now been reduced to the four youngest children. The community was helping her out.



Shortly after her husband was killed, a well-off lady came and offered to take the two older children to help take care of the lady's children and house. The children would be fed well and provided schooling. Since it seemed like an answer to prayers concerning how she would feed her six children, she turned her two oldest children over to the lady. She has not heard from them since. This is a way that some people enslave children in Haiti.

We then visited Mr. Orlas' grave site. He was the community patriarch who donated hundreds of acres of land to the church to help the community rather than sell the land and use the money to live comfortably in Port-au-Prince.

We then returned to the Royal Decameron.

Friday, June 16, 2017

The computer I purchased to replace the computer that died in February, died.

The Roads of Haiti

When there is a disabled vehicle on the highway, flags are not put up; flares are not lit and placed; green branches are cut and used to alert other drivers. About 20 miles south of the Royal Decameron, on the way to Arcahaie, we saw branches and slowed down. There had been an accident. We never knew the details, but one person had died. Later we heard that several more had been injured. As we traveled up and down Route 1, we saw several vehicles that had been in accidents and were still sitting beside the road.

We got to Arcahaie and then to the church.

GPS N 18° 47.271' W 072° 32.118'

VBS

We went to the church where there were 150 to 200 children. The team set up for VBS, and I set up my cameras. During VBS the children did not pay as much attention as the other groups had, so the VBS was not as joyful as the other classes had been.

Church Inspection

Helen pointed out that the church had asked for \$20,000 to fix two cracks that had developed during the recent flooding. I did an inspection to see how serious the cracks were; and in the process, I found several other problems which were more serious than the cracks.

An aspect of the inspection was that plumbing and electrical lines were run inside a beam that was supporting one wall of the church. Soil and backfill, which would normally support the beam, had eroded out from under a section of that beam. The soil that remains in place was muddy and provided little support.

An interesting aspect of the inspection concerned termites. I found a termite tunnel coming up a wall; and since I was curious where it went, I followed it and found that it went behind a piano. The piano was within about 1/2 inch from the wall, and the tunnel bridged that gap and went into the piano. A minor tunnel

continued up the wall about 2/3 of a meter and stopped. Piano was out of tune. I do not know if the termites contributed to de-tuning the piano or not.

A full report will be produced concerning the findings of the inspection.

Before leaving, we went over to the school building. It had been a one-story building for a number of years, and recently a second story had been added. I did not do an inspection of the building, but was able to spot many problems just standing outside the building.

We departed and headed back to the Royal Decameron.



Saturday, June 17, 2017

I had been invited to the graduation at the American University of the Caribbean, in Les Cayes, to see some of my engineering students graduate. Since getting to Les Cayes by vehicle takes most of the day and since there is only one flight per day to Les Cayes and one back to Port-au-Prince, I would have had to leave Port-au-Prince on Friday morning, attend the graduation on Saturday morning, and catch the Sunday plane back to Port-au-Prince. Besides that, someone would have to deliver me from the Royal Decameron to the Port-au-Prince Airport very early on Friday morning. A decision was made that I would not attend the graduation.

On Friday evening, Helen told us that the VBS at San Marc had been canceled. Since it was Saturday, there would not be the normal complement of teachers available to help with the children. As my old friend Bobby Burns used to say, “The best laid plans of mice and men oft go asunder.” Since we had a “free” day, she suggested that we go to a museum and learn a little Haitian history. **Musee Ogier-Fombrum**, which was just down the road, is an old sugar mill that was part of a sugar plantation. Ogier was the owner of the plantation. Fombrum was the architect who bought the plantation headquarters and developed it into the museum.

Back before the slave revolt, Haiti produced 75% of the world’s sugar. The guide at the museum told us about factors which led to the revolt, as well as explained the sugar-making process.

The French government was in the process of abolishing slavery, but the French on Haiti would not accept that concept. The French government controlled the sugar market, and profits moved to the French government rather than to the people who managed and owned the sugar plantations. The owners and managers wanted more control, but the French government would not consider their demands. Apparently the politicians of that day and time were about like the politicians of this day and time.

The cane presses were fascinating; gears were made from wood, and the teeth of the gears were replaceable. The presses were turned by donkey power or by slave power.

The slave owners could keep the slaves under control in part because they came from many different tribes and each tribe was loyal to members of that tribe and not to any other group. The revolt gained strength when one man found a way to unite the different tribes under one banner.

Sunday, June 18, 2017

Sunday was our scheduled decompression day. Before the breakfast buffet opened at 7:00 am, we headed to Port-au-Prince for Lophane's daughter's graduation. I ended up holding a baby for much of the time we were at the three hour graduation ceremony. After lunch we drove up to Kenscoff so the rest of the group could see what Port-au-Prince looked like from the top of a mountain. We then headed back to the Royal Decameron.

Monday, June 19, 2017

The trip to Port-au-Prince was uneventful, except we passed a 10-wheel dump truck that had turned over.

We got to the airport, processed through, boarded, and flew to Miami.

At Miami, we went through Immigration and Customs. We turned our bags back in to American Airlines and headed to our gate. There was plenty of time for supper.

We got to San Antonio, found our bags, and Judy picked me up. We turned into our driveway at about 11:55 pm.

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

I took my dead computer in to Microsoft at 2:00 pm. They got it working, and the technician treated me like an adult and not like a 2-year-old.