

Haiti Update – Delmas 75 Class

June 2019 Trip

Thursday, June 20, 2019

Originally, I was to fly to Haiti on June 15. The trip was delayed because of rioting in the streets of Port-au-Prince. Our security team determined that it would be better if I delayed the trip for a few days.

On Wednesday, June 19, I flew to Haiti, Lophane Laurent picked me up at the airport, and I spent the night and the next week at his guest house in Delmas 75. Delmas is a commercial and industrial community in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area.

During Wednesday evening we discussed the progress the instructors had made in teaching the 32 students in the class.

The classroom is in the same compound as Lophane's Guest House, is located directly behind it, and is on the second floor. There are a ceiling fan and openable windows to cool the classroom. By US standards it was not large enough for 32 students, but by placing the chairs close together and using small chairs, 32 students fit into the room.

We had breakfast at 7:00 am and about 8:30 students started arriving. Class start time was set for 9:00 am to give the students time to get to class if there were any disturbances in the streets. Today there were not.

Chaudry started off the class with a prayer and leading the group in singing the Doxology. This is how we start all our classes.

Lophane said a few things and introduced me. The students knew who I was and were looking forward to meeting me. I said a few things, and pointed out how I had consulted concerning many homes which were built in the US that failed because the people building them took shortcuts. I challenged them to build homes in Haiti which were better than some of the homes built in the US. By the time I got through, they were laughing and saying they were going to try.

Chaudry taught the first class. It went much longer than when I teach it with a translator. Literally, every student was asking questions, and the class went much deeper into the subject than when I would lead the class. The same thing happened when the other instructors led a class. Apparently, the students are reluctant to ask questions of someone who has been introduced to



them as an expert. As a result, the instructors are better teachers than I am. After the students departed, I explained this to the instructors. The response was, "If you had not taught us, we would never have understood these things."

We had 32 in the class. The instructors usually sat outside the door when they were not teaching. Each had other commitments and would be gone half a day at a time. We always had at least two of the four instructors present. Being right outside the door, they could hear, but they were not taking up space in the very crowded classroom. I started sitting in a small chair, and a larger chair was brought for me. When I got up to talk, there were still a few students coming in. Since my chair was next to the door, the late students tended to sit in it. The other students enjoyed pointing out that the chair was reserved.

At lunch a feast was served. Brown rice with a Creole Sauce among other things. Lophane's wife oversaw the cooking of the food. Her mother and her sister were among the people who helped prepare the food. Since it was being prepared at ground level just below our classroom, everyone knew what was being fixed and had smelled it as it was being cooked. We were more than ready to eat when we broke for lunch at 12:00. Since some of the students may only eat one meal a day, it is our practice to provide a noon meal. Not just a skimpy meal, but a heaping plate of food.

It was hot, and the heat sapped my energy. After I ate, Lophane told me to lie down for a few minutes and he would get me up when the class started. About 45 minutes later Rony came and said that they had decided to let me sleep.

We proceeded with more presentations and lots of questions. Periodically I would be asked to get up and respond to a question. Apparently, my being in the room did not slow the questions down. The students addressed follow-up questions to the instructor, not me. If I was to answer, the instructor would rephrase the question for me to answer.

Rony, who is often referred to as my babysitter, serves as my assistant in Haiti. He ensures I have what I need and when not otherwise involved, uses my camera to take photos.

After the class was dismissed for the day, I napped again and then got out my computer.

Supper was sliced green beans, tomatoes, brown rice and a Creole sauce with goat meat in it. The juice was a blend that I did not recognize, but it was good.

Lophane checked after supper, and he did not find any reports of protest activity going on. Looking over the Port-au-Prince skyline, we did not see any smoke from burning tires.

Friday, June 21, 2019

On the evening of June 20, my phone quit connecting to Verizon. This could be for a number of reasons, including that I do not know what I am doing. Another reason is that the Verizon server is locally down. With problems in Haiti, I cannot discount this possibility. With my knowledge of cell phones, I cannot discount the other one as well.

That afternoon I started getting text messages; and when I responded, I was informed that I would have to pay standard roaming charges. This would indicate that the Verizon system was down locally.

Breakfast was late. 7:10 rather than 7:00 am, but the coffee was made before 7:00 am so that made everything OK. Seriously, time is not as important in Haiti as it is perceived to be in the US. We joke about the time but do not let it concern us.

I was again impressed by the number of questions the students were asking the instructors. I commented on it to the class and told them about how when I worked for corporate America, the only diploma I would post was my 8th-grade diploma. I explained that then I could learn from everyone who stepped into my office. They were laughing, and afterward there were a few more questions directed at me.

One young man asked me what my greatest success was. I thought for a moment, and since Nedjie was standing next to me, I said, "When Nedjie started calling me Granpapa." After the class settled down, I commented that an even bigger success would be if all of the class called me Granpapa. Suddenly everyone was calling me Granpapa.

Then I talked about originally being pushed into coming to Haiti for one week and never planning on coming back. I saw a need to teach what I knew. Then I saw a need to teach instructors to take my place. My greatest success was right here. It was Haitians taking over an impossible dream that I had.



I had one copy of Volume I of **Failing My Way to Success** with me, so mid-afternoon, Chaudry called the young man up who had asked about my greatest success, and I told him that I went about failing and learning from each failure, so I counted my failures rather than my successes and each failure led to a success. I gave him a copy of the book. The class was roaring. He asked me to autograph his book, so I autographed it "Granpapa Herb." In the photo, Chaudry is in the middle and the young man who asked about my greatest success is on the right.

Now, moving back to earlier in the day, as lunchtime approached, Sem continued to teach, and Chaudry, Nedjie, Ron, and Rony were all hauling plates, food, etc., from the open air kitchen down below to the second floor where the class-

room was located. In the photo, Nedjie is bringing up a dish of chicken drumsticks.

We passed a sheet around for all of the students to write their names as they would like to see them on their certificates.

As we shut down until Monday, several of the instructors who had my books from previous classes asked that I autograph them, and I did.

When I was getting ready to autograph Nedjie's books, I asked if I should autograph them, "To my favorite granddaughter." She did not think so, but gave me a hug afterward and then told one of the students (a long-time friend of hers) "You need to hug Granpapa." I think it was a set-up because Rony was right there with a camera saying, "One more. One more."

Supper was white rice, Creole sauce, and a baked dish I did not recognize but am ready to have again and again.

Then I spent the evening getting the list of students organized and started making out certificates. My illustrator, should I say, my favorite illustrator, developed the certificates. The first step is to develop a certificate template for the class. This involves inserting pertinent data related to the class and saving it as an MS Word template. The second step is to open a Word document based on that template, adding the student's name, adding the name of the instructor who will sign the certificate, and saving the document as an Adobe PDF. We have found that if saved as an MS Word document, often the formatting gets messed up if we have to go to a print shop that deals exclusively with Apple products. The certificates are signed by Lophane (for Mission Haiti), by me, and by one of the four instructors.

Besides the June Port-au-Prince class, we needed to make out the certificates for the February class and for the Delugé class.

I had been told that the air conditioner was going to be working that night. Electricity can be a scarce commodity in Haiti. In facilities where air conditioning is available, it is often only available between 9 pm and 6 am. Often, as where we were, the air conditioners were run with a diesel generator, and with the price of diesel going up and with the protests interfering with obtaining diesel, often the diesel was not available, so we opened the window (with screens to keep the mosquitoes out) and enjoyed the "cool" breeze.

Saturday, June 22, 2019

I did not write an update for Saturday, June 22, 2019. This section was written later from memory. My excuse can range from "I did nothing" to "I was so tired from doing something that I did not take the time to write it before going to bed." You decide.

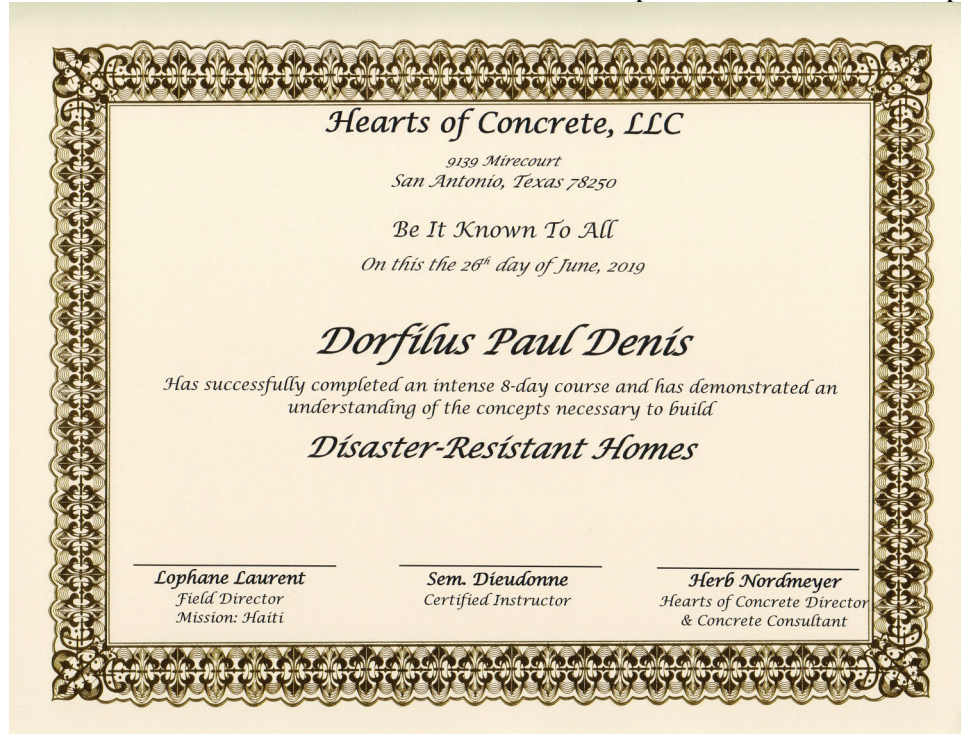
Seriously, most of the day was involved with deciphering the names of the students and formatting the certificates. Debbie, my illustrator, produced excellent templates, but it just took me a little time to learn how to use them. I have used them before, but I kept forgetting what I already knew.

I added the date, the student's name, and inserted the name of one of the instructors. We had 32 students on the list and 4 instructors, so each instructor would sign 8 certificates. Then Lophane said, "You do not understand; we are taking this class through June 26 rather than trying to run a second class for 3 days." Consider-

ing how the students asked questions, having an 8-day class rather than a 5-day class was much better. So, I went back and changed the certificates to reflect an 8-day class. Then I went back and changed the certificates to show the completion date as June 26, rather than June 21. If I would have been thinking, I could have done both with one opening of each document.

Then there was the little detail that some of the letter “c” had a tail and others did not. After finding the correct symbol on the computer, that was taken care of.

The photo shows one of our certificate documents printed on Certificate paper



In, with, and under all of this, I am in the process of formatting a hymnal for a friend. So, when I got tired of certificates, I worked on the hymnal for a little while.

At lunchtime, Lophane and I went to a local café and had lunch. It was good. There were no signs of violence or riots. There was not a great deal of traffic on the roads.

Late in the afternoon we got out the printer and printed one copy of the certificate on certificate paper. It came out very good. We then waited to determine whether all the students passed the final exam before printing more of the certificates.

By 10 pm I was way past being ready for bed. The air conditioner showed a red light, so that meant there was electricity, so I turned it on, closed the window, and went to bed.

Sunday, June 23, 2019

We were up and had breakfast and headed for Bon Berger Lutheran Church at 8:00 am. Choir members needed to be there early, and we were going in one vehicle.

Based on estimates during previous times when I was there, I would say the sanctuary holds about 320 people. There is seating for the main choir which probably will accept 30 more people.

This Sunday was the 23rd anniversary of the founding of Bon Berger Lutheran Church. There were several choirs. Since the choir area only had room for the main choir (about 30 members), the front 5 or 6 rows were reserved for the other choirs. There was a ladies' choir of about 30 members, a children's choir of 32 members, and a youth choir. (I made it a point to get a bulletin to give to Pastor Wehmeyer so he could see what the service was like, and then I filled it with notes so I could write a story about the service for Judy to send out. If anyone receiving a copy of the story about this service will let me know, I will email a copy.)

Since Lophane and his wife were in the choir, he parked me and his two children beside a young lady. Later I learned that she was newly engaged to one of the musicians.

Before the service started, there was a problem with the projector which projects readings and hymns on the front wall of the church. The data cable kept falling out. Finally, another cable was found but it was shorter, and the projector had to be moved. The projector had sideways keystone adjustment, so the image remained fairly rectangle, but the strong keystone adjustment and the added distance caused some deterioration of the image.



There was also a problem with several of the microphones. At one point, when Pastor Thomas was making an announcement before the service, the technician told him what I translated as, "Please keep on talking." He did.

With the problems and for other reasons, we did not follow the order of worship as printed in the bulletin. For example, when the children's choir was listed as singing, the ladies' choir sang. Later I was informed that the director of the children's choir made that request. Several other things were moved around.

Pastor Bernard from Cap Haitien preached the sermon. Cap Haitien is on the northern coast of Haiti about 66 kilometers from the border with the Dominican Republic.

At the end of the service, Pastor Thomas called a man from Michigan up who has been bringing teams to Haiti for 20 years. Even though there was rioting in the Petionville area, he was planning on taking his team there. After the service Lophane, who knew him, talked to him about the dangers of going there, but he said that there would be no problem.

Then Pastor Thomas called me up to say a few words.

After the service, there was a meal. Some had take-out boxes, but Lophane got me up to the third floor, where there was a long table with 24 chairs and at one end of the room there were serving trays of food. Lots of delicious-looking food.

Someone decided I should be first in line, but I managed to let someone else lead off.

The food was even better than it looked.

After lunch, we came back to the house.

Candice arrived at about 3:30 or so. Betty, Lois, and Helen arrived at about 4 pm. Amy's plane had been delayed, and she would be in about 7:00 pm.

Helen had a bedroom downstairs since she does not do stairs very well.

On this trip I was assigned to the upstairs guest bedroom that had the largest attached bathroom. There was room for only three beds in that bedroom. Since there were four ladies who were going to be sleeping upstairs, they needed the other upstairs guest bedroom. It had a single bed and two sets of bunk beds. They had to go out into the hall to get to their bathroom.

Since 4 ladies were going to be using one bathroom, I told them that I had no problem with them using mine. They were free to come and go through my room. They were very reluctant to do that the first night and the following morning. After that, the reluctance disappeared.

Since Valentine, National Police Force, often came in during the middle of the night and slept, I told him what I had told the ladies, and he said that he had no problem with them coming and going.

Monday, June 24, 2019

Last night Verizon sent me a message welcoming me to Jamaica. I thought this was strange since I was not in Jamaica, but I rolled over and went back to sleep.

During the night I heard the bathroom door close. Later it opened, and Valentine came out. He had come in hours earlier and gone to bed, and I had not woken up.

Valentine is on the National Police Force and helps with our security. Often he comes in at night when I am staying here and goes to bed.

When it started getting light, I looked at my cell phone. It was 5 am. That was strange since it usually got light at about 6 am.

We had breakfast, and Candice said that her group was going to leave about 8:30. She was getting things ready to leave. I thought it was strange, since my cell phone stated that it was approaching 7:30.

My students start arriving at 8:30, and they were arriving. Something was wrong.

Finally, I figured things out. My computer stayed with Texas Time, and my cell phone had adjusted to Jamaica time, because it thought I was in Jamaica. Jamaica is an hour different than Haiti time during the summer.

I grabbed my things and headed to class. In the process, I invited the ladies to step in and say hello to the students. They did.

I told how Candice, who is half my age, is my Mama. They laughed and thanked her for letting me come to Haiti. I explained who they were; and if the ladies could

not take VBS to children, they would come and bring VBS to the Disaster-Resistant Construction Class. This got some chuckles. Each of the ladies said a few words about their background and why they had come to Haiti.



Chaudry was not there that morning. I never heard where he was. He might have been with the ladies serving as a translator. He is a director of an orphanage, and that job takes precedence over teaching duties. Nedjie had said on Friday that she might or might not be able to be present on Monday. She arrived just before lunch. The instructors work well together and ensure that there are at least 2 instructors whenever there is a class.

This morning I printed off the list of class members so each student could determine whether I had copied his name correctly. They decided that they would work on it over lunch.

Sem took the morning classes. There was one student who spoke some broken English. It was much better than my broken Creole. We communicated. We could have called Rony in to do the translating, but both of us were determined that we were going to conquer any problems in communicating. We did.

Local schools were closed. From what we had heard, since it was a national test day, if Port-au-Prince schools were closed, they would be closed nationwide. I have not heard whether this happened or not, and if it did, whether more problems developed.

Meanwhile, our class continued.

After lunch from 12 noon to 12:30, Lophane told me to lie down and someone would wake me up at 1:00 pm. I woke up at 1:30; and when I got to the class, they let me know that decision had been made to let me sleep. Nedjie was teaching. She continued until we shut down about 3:00 pm.

With 32 people on the list, about 10 of them had problems with the way I had copied their names. Sometimes it was mixing up an S and a Z. Later in the day I made adjustments and got all of the certificates up-to-date.

Lophane stated that Nedjie's church was some distance away, and some members of her church were attending the class. He wondered if it would be appropriate

for her to select the certificates she would sign. Of course. Lophane was giving me a suggestion in the event I had not thought about it.

When the class was over, I took Nedjie aside and let her pick. She picked 8 names. Since we had four instructors and 33 students, she had an appropriate number to sign. When those students show their certificates around their community, Nedjie's status will grow.

When I got back to the house, the ladies were loading food for distribution. They had 40 bags, each with enough food to feed a family of four for 2 weeks. When they returned, they said that there were 50 families that wanted food. 10 of the families had invited their neighbors. The Pastor of the church handled what could have been an awkward situation by informing the families that had invited another family to join them that they needed to share their food. The suggestion was accepted, and everyone left happy.

After working on certificates and other computer work, I stretched out on the bed about 7 pm; and about 7:30 someone woke me up and told me that supper was ready.

Starting yesterday I had told the ladies since they were sharing one bathroom that I had no problems with them walking through my room and using my bathroom. That afternoon they started to do so.

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

Tuesday was clear, but by Tuesday evening we had a thunderstorm. Not just a little thunderstorm, but if one stood outside, one could feel the thunder. I chose not to stand outside, and if there were any protestors out, I am sure that they came to the same conclusion as I did. The weather forecast called for thunderstorms on Wednesday night and Thursday night.

After doing some computer work and having breakfast on Tuesday morning, we headed to class.

Sem led the first class, and after about an hour, Nedjie took over. After lunch, Ron took over. Nedjie had to leave for work, and Chaudry arrived. The instructors can seamlessly trade places in the middle of a presentation. This indicates that each one knows each presentation well. One thing that Ronald can do that they others cannot yet do is he can bounce backward or forward a dozen or more slides to illustrate a point. That indicates he has the position of each slide in each presentation memorized.

When we were talking about the pouring of the slab for the girls' dorm at Faith Lutheran Orphanage, I started to explain why the girls had placed their initials in the concrete and wrote the initials CD in larger letters. The dorm was named the Candice Dominguez Girls' Dorm. At the time Candice had a very serious case of cancer. In the process, I choked up.

Before the class dismissed for the day, we discussed the final exam. Some of the students were



concerned about the final, so Chaudry and I gave them an example. With a volunteer (briefed ahead of time) Chaudry projected a photo and asked a question. The student answered. Chaudry projected a photo and asked a question. The student hesitated. I approached the student and looked into his ear and announced that I could see the answer in the student's brain, so we would give him credit for that question. The class was in an uproar. The rest of the time discussing the final exam was done in a lighthearted manner.

I had produced a computer list from the class signatures, the instructors passed them around during lunch, and we received a number of corrections. Some of the letters are written differently in Haiti than in the US. I took the corrected list and started making certificates.

The printer (HP-DeskJet Ink Advantage 2600) is one we bought here in Haiti during the October 2018 trip for about \$50.00. Since I suspected the ink cartridge might run out or might be jammed after all of this time, I tried to buy the replacement cartridge in Texas. No luck; even on Amazon that computer was not listed. After I got here, Rony went past the store where we had bought it to get another black cartridge. They are no longer available. According to the clerk, they are no longer made. Rony was offered several printers to replace the one we owned.

For a while, we had a blank line through anything we printed. Running a cleaning cycle corrected that. Then we had a problem with missing spots of printing. For example, Lophane's name where he was supposed to sign a certificate. I changed to a certificate paper that was lighter-weight and got 30 certificates printed. We still had 8 to go. I stopped at 30 certificates because I was tired, not because the printer failed, but because as each certificate was printed, I examined it carefully for defects.

We also needed to print certificates for the two-day class we would be holding for the residents of Colminy, Balague, and several other villages. At that point I did not have their names, so have an excuse not to print them yet.

Lophane determined that we could go to another store and buy another printer. We had a different brand and model picked out. The cost would be about \$100.00. Rony was to go and buy it on Wednesday afternoon, but life got in the way.

Just before dark, there was a strong thunderstorm. If any protestors got caught in it, I'm sure it cooled them off. After an hour or two, the skies cleared.

Amy had a devotion for the evening. She said she was not good at that sort of thing, but with all of the discussion she generated, I think she was sadly mistaken.

Thursday morning we planned to go north to the Decameron Resort south of San Marc. The resort was opened last year. Since then they have been running a special to attract customers. (The daily rate covers room, food, drinks, and just about everything else.) The cost was cheaper than any of the other local facilities when you added the room rate and the cost of food. Sooner or later that special will be over, and we will be back to lower-grade quarters, but we will enjoy the resort while we can.

Travel to Decameron was safe. In San Marc which is just north of Decameron, protestors were stopping vehicles and extracting money. So we decided to not go to Colminy to teach, but that Colminy and the other villages would send people on motorbikes to come to the class which would be held in Delugé. People on motorbikes could pass freely past the protestors since it was more likely that they were poor

Haitians, while those in cars would tend to be richer, might be government officials, or might contain a foreigner (that can get foreign news coverage). Of course, foreigners always have lots of money.

We planned to be there Thursday night and Friday night. Saturday the ladies were headed back to the US, so we would leave Decameron about 7 am on Saturday morning so they could catch their respective planes.

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Valentine actually came into the room and went to bed before I was asleep. Well, he was in the room and was getting ready to go to bed. It did not take long for me to get to sleep, so I might have dropped off before he got into bed.

After breakfast, we headed to the classroom, and the class started at 9:00 am. The plan was to finish all the presentations before lunch, and then after a lunch break have the final examination.

Chaudry handled most of the morning teaching. The main topic was church building. What does a person need to know about special structural design to build a church? Most churches have tall walls, peaked ceilings, long walls, and wide areas. The larger the church, the more each of these characteristics becomes noticeable. Each of these was addressed.

Chaudry went into detail about each, so was not quite through when it was time for lunch. Since I was to meet Lophane in the house for lunch, I departed with the comment that it was up to them whether they finished the presentation or broke for lunch.

I headed back to the house and made up the grading sheets for the final examination.

When I got back from lunch with Lophane, the students were finishing up their lunch, so I suspect they decided that the presentation was more important than an immediate lunch.

We assembled, and the final exam started. A photo would be projected and either Sem or Ronald would call on a student. (Nedjie could not be present on Wednesday.) The student would answer, and Sem and Ronald would mark on their forms how the student did. If the answer was lacking, the class was asked if anyone could help the student out. They complied with glee. If the student's answer was not satisfactory, he would be given another photo or two and another question or two. The final exam brought up all the important topics and reviewed them one last time.

This exam went smoothly without anyone trying to influence the judges. During the October 2018 exam, one well-endowed lady wore a low-cut dress, and as she answered her questions, she would be looking at me and leaning over. The judges (Nedjie was present for that exam) saw what was going on and chuckled a great deal. I had nothing to do with the grading. All the answers were in Creole, and my Creole is not good enough for me to be able to accurately judge the answers even if I were a judge. Apparently, the lady had not listened when we had talked about how the exam would be judged, and apparently, she figured she needed a little extra help. On that Sunday when the certificates were given out, she wore a very conserva-

tive dress. While I do not know if the instructors told that story or not, I do know that the instructors and I had commented on it among ourselves the day before.

One of the students, probably the tallest and most muscular in the class, regularly asked questions and argued with the instructors. It was evident that he was having fun, but it disrupted the class. Chaudry had told me that he was the son of a pastor and had considered going to the seminary.

When he was called on to answer a question, he did a good job; and then I commented that since he had tried to stump the instructors, I thought he should be asked 15 questions. The class laughed. The instructors discussed it and decided that it would be appropriate to ask him 15 questions, and the questions should be hard ones. Suddenly he was sweating. Not a little sweat, but it was pouring off him. He had a towel and kept mopping his face.



After 5 questions, we agreed that he had passed and let him sit down. As he finished mopping his face yet again, I reached over and shook his hand and said, "Good Job." He smiled big. After that, whenever we made eye contact, he would smile.

All students passed, and we started packing up and prepared to head to Delugé on Thursday morning.

All the certificates except for the certificates for the February class were complete, and Sem, Ronald, and Chaudry signed the appropriate ones. Nedjie was not available to sign hers. I also signed.

Somewhere in there I found a two-hour nap and worked on certificates for the February class.

The ladies needed to pack everything they were taking home, since they would go directly from Decameron on Saturday morning to the Port-au-Prince Airport. I needed to only pack what I would need for the trip to Delugé.

With everything going on, it was an hour past my bedtime before I got to bed. The ladies were still packing when I headed to bed. After all, we were to leave at 7:00 am on Thursday morning.