

## **Holy Spirit Haiti Mission Trip June 28-July 5, 2011**

The objective of this mission was to 1) install a water purification system at St. Michael's parish in Decouze, 2) get updates on the LWW warehouse project, 3) get information to complete the CRS grant for the Vo Tech school at Palmiste au Vin, 4) visit with Eliane and the kids at Notre Dame de la Charite orphanage to discuss upcoming projects and the next school year and 5) visit with Dr. Pierre Inobert, Director of Fond du Blanc hospital, to establish a relationship and possible source of doctors for the St. Charles clinic in Palmiste au Vin. All five of these objectives were met and the team was even able to enjoy a little 'off' time in Jacmel for a part of a day. We were also able to visit Trinity House in Jacmel and replace the board pump whose motor had died. This system belongs to 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church in Sioux City, IA.

Team members were Bob & Kathy McCoy and James Porges from Huntsville, Chuck Arnold from Erie, PA, and Ashley Broadhurst from Las Vegas, NV.

Day 1 Tuesday – James, Kathy and I left out of Huntsville at 6A, Chuck out of Erie, PA same time and Ashley had already left Las Vegas the evening before to Miami. She got into PAP at 9a and met with Ancy one of the in country coordinators and spent the day investigating other possible sites for water systems. The three of us met up with Chuck in Ft. Lauderdale with lots of prayer time as Chuck is plagued by delayed planes all day. They closed the door as Chuck and I are the last in and his bags even made it. Ancy and Ashley are at the airport to meet us and now the dreaded drive through PAP. On the west side of PAP we leave Ancy at this home and I drive the truck the rest of the 25 mile to the monastery. It is dark when we arrive to a joyous reunion with the Little Brothers. We have come home again.

Day 2 Wednesday – Up early for a very special celebration of the dedication mass for the St. Charles Bororemo school that was rebuilt through funds from the Germans and HSHM. This was quite the event and Fre Olizard had planned long and hard for this day. There were many people from the community and several gave 5 min talks including myself who addressed the audience in Creole and am sure they have never heard their language spoken like that. The LBST hosted a wonderful meal afterward and the party didn't break up until about noon. Time to go to work. From our last trip in March where we installed 5 systems in 3 weeks we learned the art of mass production at the monastery and applied the technique today. All except James were experienced system builders and he caught on quickly. The system was built on the board in less than 4 hours and ready for installation the next day. We were all pretty tired, so rest that evening was welcome.

Day 3 Thursday – Up early for morning liturgy (5:30), breakfast and then off to Decouze to install the system. This is a case where Fre Olizard has done the preliminary investigation of the site to check for a proper water source, valid electricity and a building to house the system. All was exactly as he said it would be. I have never hooked up a system so quickly. We were on site by 8a and by noon we had the system mounted and plumbed, a well pump installed in the reservoir and pipe run from 80' away, electricity run to the house and the tank mounted on the roof and plumbed. Time to test it out. The one imperfect moment of the trip – the trash filter head literally came apart under pressure as soon as

we turned on the well pump. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> one in a row, 2 from last trip and now this one. So that we could test the rest of the system, we built a bypass around the trash filter (which we really didn't need because the concrete reservoir that held the rain water was free of sand and dirt) and all worked well. We had some epoxy so decided to try and glue the head over night and come back the next day to do training for the operators and the community. Since we had a half day left we went to the beach at Caye Jacmel and enjoyed a Prestige beer and the ocean which was pretty rough on this day.

Day 4 Friday – Up for morning liturgy and communion, breakfast and then off to do training. For most of us, this is a boring day, because our work is done and Bertone and Ashley are the primary trainers. We have to shock the tank and flush the system with the residue chlorine to kill any initial bacteria. This takes about an hour and then the filters get installed and the engineering part is done. We will do small things like marking water direction on the board, tying up electrical wires and neatening up the installation. But it is up to the trainers now and they do a spectacular job as usual because Father Guy and his crew at the parish house really 'get it' as do the kids at the school. The day is declared a great success. Before we part company in the late afternoon, we pour the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 gal bottle of water and we all sign the board after which time we present to the St. Michael Haitians their water purification system. It is a proud moment for all of us. Number 14 is turned over to the community.

Day 5 Saturday – After breakfast we take off for Jacmel to fix the pump at Trinity house. This has been a problem plaguing them for two months and Bertone has asked for some additional expertise. It was an excellent training session for Bertone. Once we confirmed the problem (the motor, not the pump) we dissected the two so we didn't have to take any PVC apart. As luck would have it though the spare motor and pump did not separate so easily and we ended up having to hacksaw a screw head off. You have to be prepared for anything in Haiti. We get the pump assembled and ready to test... and no water. Turns out the reservoir pump unbeknownst to us was dead also and our spare was back at the warehouse. We packed up with instructions for Bertone to return the following week to install the other pump. We then went on to check on the other system in Jacmel at Father Phillippe's Formation Center. It was a good reunion as I had not seen him in two years since we had installed their system. With a part of an afternoon left we go to downtown Jacmel to the artists section and had a great time mingling with the Haitians and checking out the local art. For the past year this has all been closed up due to the earthquake. We met some great people that afternoon and I know Jesus was there among all of us. The drive from Jacmel on the south coast goes up 3000 feet through the mountains to Palmiste au Vin which is about 1200 feet and the scenery is absolutely spectacular. What a perfect day this has been.

Day 6 Sunday – Up for 6:30 mass in DuFort with Pere Bleu. 250 people crowded into this dirt floor church bringing their own chairs as we did also. The church is in ruins and a makeshift wooden structure suffices. The singing was beautiful and like any other Catholic mass you may not understand the words, but you know what is happening. Chuck has brought along 36 rosaries specially made by his parish to give to Pere Bleu who blesses them and gladly accepts the gift. Back up the mountain to the monastery for breakfast and then we set out to visit the orphanage. It is then that I learn that Fre Alabrae is leaving the Palmiste au Vin monastery that day to go to the mother house in Carrefour to prepare to take his final vows in August and then go onto the Carice monastery (site of another water system). It is

bittersweet for me because he has been at the monastery even since I have been coming to Haiti and I will miss him dearly. At the orphanage, we split up. Garry has arranged for a meeting with the Regional President of SVdP and several conference Presidents and myself which I go off to attend while the rest of the crew work with Eliane and the kids. Eliane is incredible. Since the earthquake she has built a school on the property for the K-2 kids, put up a concrete wall and gate around the property thanks to the Spanish singer Huecco and his friends, gotten a small business going selling clean water in the community and making the most of the electricity that she now has with her solar system. She always has the kids doing songs and dancing for us. The kids love to play and are especially enthralled with the technical gadgets we have like iPhones with music and cameras. Chuck being a retired school teacher of 35 years always likes getting back into his old profession. By 2p we have to leave to take Alabrae to Rivere Froid (Cold River) monastery. It's an hour away and rain is threatening in the mountains and parts of the road up into the mountains are very dangerous in best of times let alone when it rains. Lots of prayer, low in 4 wheel drive and God holding off the rain until we get off the mountain makes it a good close to the day. We also got to give Fre Leandre the General Superior one last hug. It was very sad to hug Alabrae for the last time, but he is happy and now 35 years into his life he is making this final commitment to God for the duration of his years.

Day 7 Monday – Happy Birthday America! We have an appointment with Dr. Inobert at Fond du Blanc hospital 100 miles away at 8:30. Olizard has to be back by noon, so we're rolling about 4:30a with hard boiled eggs and bananas for breakfast saying the rosary and dodging the potholes. Once we get off the main road it is slow going and rough. About half way through the 18km we encounter a serious river and its flowing pretty fast. Not only that, it looks like it's at least 3 ft deep, but you can't see the bottom, so who knows? No snorkel on this diesel truck, so another Hail Mary and off we go. We made it through OK only to hear a loud scraping noise once we emerge from the water. The engine pan under the truck had bent half way backward from the force of going through the water and yes we had no tools. Some muscle and a second stage lever out of a log plus a piece of wire scrounged by one of the folks in the area got us back on the road. Our arrival at the hospital in Fond du Blanc was very grace filled with one of the physical therapists who specialized in spinal injury (we all wanted to sign up for her services after the trip into Fond du Blanc from the main road) greeted us and found Dr. Inobert for us. Haiti is an amazing tale of dichotomies. Here we are in the middle of the mountains 30 miles from the nearest big town at a good sized regional hospital with 60 beds and a variety of services and speaking to a man born and raised in Haiti whose English is better than mine. It was a very pleasant visit. We got the contact information for doctors for the St. Charles clinic and we shared with Dr. Inobert what we are doing with water purification. He showed great interest in what we are doing. The trip back was spine tingling for the next 18km. Fortunately the wire held the engine plate when we crossed the river. We were back by noon. The rest of the day we spent packing and rearranging the warehouse and getting ready for our next visit.

Day 8 Tuesday – If Port au Prince is anything, it is unpredictable, so in order to allow for contingencies we were up at 4a and leaving at 5:15. The brothers never let us go without breakfast and Fre Douion was cooking eggs for us in the dark because the cooks hadn't arrived yet. This is but one example of the love these men have for each other and certainly their guests. It would be the last time I had to drive

which is a major challenge in Haiti (see Ashley's blog on Day 9 where she describes this process so eloquently <http://thanksgivingprojectagb.blogspot.com/p/haiti-journal-junejuly-2011.html>) because we would pick up Ancy on the way to the airport so he could get the truck ready for the next crew. But Ancy was happy to sit in the back seat and I had to drive on to the airport. We all hugged closely. We waved goodbye to Ancy, Ashley went to the AA terminal and James, Chuck, Kathy and I to the Insel terminal. In Miami Chuck bid us farewell and left for Erie. We would not see Huntsville until 1p the next day due to cancelled and missed flights. USAir is not on our favorite's list.

It was a great trip, in fact I would say a very special trip where the team bonded in several unique ways, not just with each other, but with many of the Haitians also. So as I close this report I want you to all know that Haiti is coming back. Not so much because of what the government is doing, although they are trying some, but because of the hundreds of NGOs that are each trying to do what they can to help their brothers and sisters in Christ have a little better life. As Kathy observed (who has not been to Haiti in a year), there are many fewer tents and there is much building going on. Life will never be the same, but somehow I think it will be better after the earthquake. It's all part of God's plan and He has an incredible way of turning what looks like massive destruction into good. Perhaps this is what the future of Haiti has to hold. Kepeze.