

HSHM Haiti Trip Report Feb 18-25

The members of this team were Julie Lichay, Amber Kaderbek, Thu Throng, Gary Gilino, Kathy and Bob McCoy all of Huntsville/Madison and Chuck Arnold of Erie, PA area.

The goals of this mission were:

1. Dedicate the new NDC orphanage building
2. Set up a library at the orphanage
3. Teach at least 2-3 days of English at the orphanage
4. Install a water purification system at the orphanage
5. Install a pump in the NDC well
6. Inspect and install a pump in the new LBST well in Palmiste au Vin

In summary the orphanage building far exceeded all of my expectations. Not only was the building complete, but the grounds were concreted and grass was growing in the front of the building and in a garden area opposite the building. The water tower was installed with two 600 gal tanks at the top to provide running water and flushing toilets. The latter is a luxury that I don't think many, if any, of the kids have experienced. The rooms are large and spacious. The colors are warm and inviting. Not only has Fre Olizard made a beautiful facility, but he has given us great value for the money expended. Your gifts have truly built a structure of beauty for the kids for many years to come. And while there are no guarantees with Mother Nature, the internal design of the foundation and walls will have an excellent chance of surviving the next earthquake.

The team was all assembled in the PAP airport by 5p and on the way to Palmiste au Vin. Fre Olizard insisted that we stop by NDC on the way. I did not want to do so because I was tired and finding NDC at night is a major challenge (since I was driving) but what we saw took our breath away. I navigated to within about 300 yards looking for the narrow road leading to NDC and found it because NDC was so lit up in the distance and there are of course no other lights around it. The picture at the right is what we saw. Fre Olizard would not let us go until we saw each room and each toilet flush. He was very proud of his creation and rightfully he should be; it was magnificent!

We drove up to the monastery about 10 more miles to the west and south of NDC and everyone was treated to their first Haitian meal and a night's rest. I have asked everyone to write a short trip report and I will take comments from those I receive and publish them later.

Most of our time was designed to be spent at NDC as there was much work to do. We would go to NDC in the morning, return for lunch at the monastery and return to NDC until after dark. Days began for some at 4:30a and ended at 10p. On Wed we were treated to this sight when we arrived in the



morning. In this picture I am standing on the well. The gate is to the right edge of the picture just out of view. The water tower with the two 600 gal tanks is at the left in back of the truck. The building is two stories made in quadrants on each floor. The chapel is on the bottom floor in the front right and kitchen and dining room on the bottom floor in back of the chapel. There is a 4' wide hallway on both floors separating the rooms into the quadrant.



Front rooms are accessed from the outside and rear rooms accessed from inside. Most of the bedrooms are on the second floor. The veranda or lanai which was Olizard's idea was probably the GREATEST addition to this structure. Even in February it was 90 degrees during the day and plenty warm in the yard, but standing in the veranda area or even in the building was amazingly cool. The building is facing the way it is to minimize the sun exposure and maximize the normal wind patterns. All the windows have louvers so the breeze blowing through is very refreshing. Even on Saturday when we were all together (about 60 of us) in the chapel praying the rosary, it was very pleasant. The 8 foot wall around the property still needs to be topped with razor wire and a few other things need to be done in the back, but for now it is very livable. From just to the right of the truck all across the front of the building is grass, a beautiful and rare addition to a facility like this.

The dedication was to be held on Thursday at 5pm so we got right to work. Some of the team set up the library while others worked on the water systems and others went to Leogane for materials. By Thursday afternoon many of the tasks were finished. Things were just too chaotic for Julie and Amber to get any English training done, so we knew we would have to wait until later to begin this.

One of the greatest moments for me was meeting Huecco and his wife Laura. Huecco is a Spanish rock star who has been doing much good work in Haiti in the PAP area for years and heard about NDC after the earthquake. When Eliane told him nothing is done at NDC without Bob's involvement, I got an hour and a half phone call from him from Spain after the earthquake. We have been strong friends since that call but have never met. While I knew what he looked like since his picture is all over the Internet, he did not know what I looked like. For the first time on Wednesday we met and the solidarity of our friendship was cemented with a hug.





I knew the dedication ceremony would be a big deal, but had no idea how much Eliane and the kids (and others) put into this event. Pere Jasman celebrated the event with a mass, but the whole mass was a celebration of singing and dancing and participation by every child in the orphanage in one way or another. As an example these were four of the girls and two boys (from the NDC school) bringing forward

the gift offerings. While you can not see it here, it took them a good 5 min to dance from the gate entrance to Pere



Jasman. In the picture above are five girls that did two dances representing the flow of nature that brought tears to my eyes just through the beauty of the composition. Never have I been moved by dance and music like this. I found out later Eliane choreographed the whole thing. She has talents I never dreamed of. After the mass and speeches were made, Pere Jasman blessed each room with holy water with the girls following along. As I have said before and will say again, the Holy Spirit has had His fingerprint all over this project and it is now consecrated in Jesus' and Mary's name. I don't know where the food came from, but afterward Eliane fed at least 100 people which included many of the workers that participated in the building of this structure.

Friday we broke into two teams with half of us teaching and half of us finishing the water system and getting the well pump installed. There were several training sessions on the library and checkout system that was implemented. It turns out Amber was quite a natural teaching the kids and between Julie and Thu and she they made a real hit with the kids over the next days teaching them English in the form of song, book and games. There were several statues donated to NDC which had been shipped in ahead of time and Gary through much perseverance and minimal tools managed to get the large statue of Mary mounted on a concrete pad (that he poured) outside the front door.

Saturday afternoon Eliane, through the guidance of Thu, Julie and Amber put on a Mary crowning ceremony. The kids all dressed up again and sang and walked around the building praising God and Mary and delivered two wreaths of flowers on Mary's head. We finished that day by saying the rosary and



thanking God for all the gifts he has bestowed on all of us.

On Sunday, Chuck had to go back early to PA because of a prior commitment, so he, Fre Jonas and I were up early to leave at 5a for the airport. Sunday is not a bad day to drive in PAP. When I returned, Julie really wanted more time teaching the kids and we all agreed because of the madness of getting everything together she and Amber had been short changed on time after all the work they had done. So a good bit of Sunday and most of Monday were spent with the kids teaching English to a variety of classes. We had finished all we could do on the water system and could not start it until Tuesday when Ele would finish the final 240VAC wiring. As we were flying home, Bertone and Ele finished up the task, shocked the system and our mission's 20th water system is up and running.

As I have told some, this was a very challenging trip primarily because we did not know what we would face until we faced it. We knew there would be a dedication ceremony, but none of the details or how much preparation work would need to be done. We knew how to drop well pumps, but every one of these has a surprise associated with it and this one was no exception. The water system did not come from a kit, but from a salvaged system that was no longer used, so we did not know what parts would be needed or available. We had no idea how the kids would take to the library or teaching. But in the end God prevailed and all worked out according to His plan.

I am indebted to so many people for the gifts we were able to deliver on this trip. To Father Mike and all the parishioners of Holy Spirit, to the HSHM steering committee who made things happen, to my wife Kathy who continues to support me in every way to keep this mission going, to all the members of HSHM who have gone to Haiti with me over the years and shared my love and their talents for the Haitians, to Fre Olizard and all the PFST for their support, for Huecco and all his gifts and influence that he has brought to bear and to my special friend Chuck Arnold who through it all has been my confidant and brother in the good times and not so good times. I thank you all and many whom I have probably missed for your love and support. May God's Peace and Grace be with each of you.

