

## **HAITI MISSION**

### **TRIP REPORT, FEBRUARY 5 – 12, 2015**

**February 5, 2015**

#### **Travel Day**

Today, I had the honor of flying from home to Port-au-Prince, Haiti with our Haitian Mission Team Leader, Bob McCoy, and Team Members, Rudolfo Chavez, Darcy Sylvester, and Renee' Corbet. Although Renee' is from Huntsville, she is a 4<sup>th</sup> year Civil Engineering student at the University of Pittsburg in Pennsylvania. Renee' met up with us at the Atlanta airport. She is bright, charming, and always has a warm smile for everyone. This is her 3<sup>rd</sup> mission to Haiti.

Bob is the Senior Team Leader and he has been coming to Haiti for 10 years or so. Rudolfo, called Rudy, Darcy and I are Haiti Mission rookies.

Today, travel was uneventful as far as "on time" flights were concerned. Huntsville to Atlanta to Port-au-Prince was perfect. We did sustain air turbulence over the Caribbean, but nothing to be concerned about.

Now as for packing for the trip, well that was one of the three great adventures. Bob, Darcy, Rudy and I packed about 150 lbs. apiece in 11 bags. The challenge was how to keep weight limits in each bag for airline conformity and cost minimalization. After we all arrived at the Huntsville airport, we repositioned suitcase contents and after an hour, the task was achieved with the addition of one extra bag. Adventure One was accomplished. Success would be meeting up with all our heavy luggage in Port-au-Prince. Voila! Everything was there!

Adventure two was getting through customs, the airport, and the on rushing team of baggage porters waiting to help us, for a fee of course. Frere Olizard, with a team of selected handlers was there to rescue us. In the parking lot, we and they faced an interesting dilemma, "how to fit 750 plus lbs. into a vehicle probably designed for less. Weight was not the problem, but space availability was. Eleven bags, back packs, and six people were wedged, and I mean

wedged, into what then seemed to be a tiny vehicle. But with God's Blessing, and strong local human arms, we made it. Thank you God, or Merci Bon Dieu.

On to adventure number three, driving from Port-au-Prince to the Monastery of Frere Olizard. This part of the adventure was serious, the poverty witnessed of these POOR people. The homes that they live in are in most cases, not real houses as we know them to be in the U.S. They are structures made out of whatever! Maybe concrete walls with re-bar sticking out of the top, meaning future add on construction. Yea, right! No money, no add-on. Many other homes were wood or tin metal structures, with canvass or other materials covering them or surrounding them. Scrap pieces of corrugated roofing were the norm. Just a note, in my years of work travel, I have been through "gettos" in the States, and nothing measures up to this. People are also everywhere, looking for hand outs, or trying to sell you fruits, sugar cane, water, used clothing, cheap bling, or whatever.

The ride took a couple of hours through heavily populated towns or cities on rudimentary roads, packed with TapTaps (buses), motorcycles, trucks, bicycles, and a number of other motorized vehicles. Driving? Well that was another story, the thrill of a lifetime. All these vehicles zig zagging everywhere. Center lines? Who needs them! Vehicles driving lickity split cutting in and out, passing around curves, up or down hills, are the norm here. And that is what we witnessed. But we made the adventure in one piece, as the expression goes.

We made it to the Monastery with God's Blessing, and St. Christopher clearing our way, to a warm reception from the Brothers. We said Prayers of Thanks, and enjoyed a delicious meal of fruits, rice and a savory sauce, baked chicken, and bread.

After supper, we unpacked, sorted, and fell off to sleep pretty early. Day one was good, Thanks be to God.

**February 6, 2015**

**First Day of “Hard Labor” at the Orphanage**

The morning started at 5:30 a.m. with “Matins”, or prayers in the Chapel. The Brothers (Freres) chanted beautiful prayers, psalms, and readings in their native Creole language. It was beautiful to honor God (le Bon Dieu) like this at the start of the day. Bob, Rudy, Darcy, Amber and I joined the celebration of worship. Oh Yes, Amber, I forgot to mention her on day one. She is a beautiful young lady, now a full time Missionary here in Leogane, Haiti. She is from Huntsville, an engineer by education, but God selected her for Haiti mission, and she answered his call. More on Amber later.

After a morning Mass at sunrise, we enjoyed a delicious egg casserole breakfast with the Brothers.

Now off to work! With the pickup truck loaded with packed suitcases full of tools, we motored over to the beautiful orphanage. Interesting ride, that! In the back of the truck rode Renee’ and Darcy. Having flexible young bodies, the ladies cork screwed themselves into the spots available amongst the tools. Being in a tight spot was one thing, but traversing the bumpy roads, in and out of traffic, foot high speed bumps, goats and dogs trying to commit suicide as they crossed the road, and Bob’s “Grand Prix” driving, the ladies totally enjoyed the “hair blower ride”. About 20 minutes later we arrived at the orphanage. We were anxious to see the children but they were in school until after 1 p.m. Their school is just a little walk through the fields and gardens with grazing goats and a cow or two.

Not to worry, Bob put us right to work. Our chore was to build two wooden closets for two dorm rooms on the upper floor. The orphanage is a beautiful two story building that is home for the 50 or so beautiful young girls, and one 7 year old little boy, Guevins, or “Tijo”, as he is affectionately called. His mother gave him up to Eliane, the founder, and head of the orphanage. The orphanage is for young girls, and Tijo will have to go somewhere else in about 2 years. A very happy little boy with a possibly sad future. Please say prayers for Guevins.

We unloaded the tools and began to tackle the task at hand. The team consisted of Bob, Amber, Renee', Darcy, Rudy, myself, and Bertone. Bertone is a Haitian who works on the water purification systems. He works closely with Bob to install, maintain, and teach the communities of people who are lucky enough to have pure water. Most of the people of Haiti have to carry containers of water from the local wells, or river beds, to their homes. The water is far from pure, and may or may not be boiled by the locals.

So this is fun, 7 "cooks in the kitchen", so to speak, to build 2 free standing wooden closets. With Commander Bob in charge, we began to measure, cut, and assemble the structures in the warm Haitian sun. Yes, sunscreen and mosquito repellent were generously applied. The temperature was in the high 70's and low 80's, enough to bring up a healthy sweat. And girls really do sweat in Haiti, too!!

Bob did a great job of teaching the Newbie's on how to measure, cut, nail, screw, and assemble the structures. He has the patience of Job. Not everyone was a rookie to carpentry. Rudy served tours in Kuwait, Iraq, and other Middle East nations, so he had experience with rudimentary building for our military troops. We learned quickly that his tool of choice was the hammer. The old song of the 60's, "If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning, I'd hammer in the evening, all over this land" must be his theme song.

Renee' is a 4<sup>th</sup> year Civil Engineering student and she was our P.E. (Project Engineer). Darcy is a very bright young lady, with a degree in Computer Science, and she learned very quickly. By the end of the day she was a skilled carpenter. Bertone was also learning a new skill, and he did great. Amber, meanwhile, was preparing for the children with Eliane, the Mother of the orphanage and the little children.

The day progressed well, as the two closets were assembled. There would be another day or two of building the shelves, the sliding doors, installing a PVC bar to hang clothing, and to anchor the closets to the concrete walls. With only a modest break for a peanut butter lunch, we put in a great day of work that I believe Jesus would have been proud of.

Rudy and I took the ride back to the monastery in the back of the pickup truck. It must have been funny to watch two 60 year old guys try to climb up and wedge ourselves in wherever room allowed. Since we sweated so much, the folks riding inside the truck were most appreciative.

After showers and a delicious warm meal, prepared by the Brothers and their staff, day two was complete and successful. Thanks be to God.

**February 7, 2015**

### **Second Day at Notre Dame de la Charite'**

Since the children did not have school on Saturday, we had many gifts and surprises for them. We also had more work to do on the two closets. Bob had meetings he needed to conduct with Eliane, and some other people.

So the "closet" team was Rudy, Bob, and Renee', and the "children's" team was Amber, Darcy, Renee', (yes, she doubled at both tasks), and yours truly. The mission with the children was as follows:

- 1) Get an individual close up picture of all the children
- 2) Give each child a new tee shirt that had the Notre Dame de la Charite' name, and collage of past pictures pressed on the shirts. Darcy sized each child with the appropriate size shirt.
- 3) Give each child a letter from their Holy Spirit sponsor
- 4) Give each child a new blue pen
- 5) Play with the children

Amber, Eliane, and one of the teen age girls helped co-ordinate the event. All the children were taken into the Chapel to sing and pray while we photographed and fit each child with the pink shirts, (blue for TiJo) and handed out their letters and pens. The real chore was getting each child to smile. Renee' stood behind the photographer and she made funny faces, and did "red carpet poses". Smiling was about 70% successful. Getting them to say Ayiti, the Creole word for Haiti, helped exposed their teeth and a pretty smile.

After all the pictures were done, Darcy started drawing pictures of roosters, air planes, cars, fish, and anything else the kids wanted to see. It was a fun time and everyone did a great job with the children. Meanwhile, upstairs, Rudy, Bertone, Bob and Renee' were hard at work on the two closets. Renee' was up and down all day.

The afternoon session with the kids was all about preparing and baking Dove Chocolate Discoveries dark chocolate truffle BROWNIES. They are called "Jeannettes" in French but we just called them brownies. They do not have this in Haiti, so no word for brownies!

In the dining room, the children sat at 4 tables, assisted by Team Leaders, Renee', Darcy, Amber, and a senior girl. The children got to add the truffle mix to the bowl, break and add two eggs, one stick of melted butter, and mix. (mélange in French and Creole). They next folded in the pieces of chocolate chips, and every child got to mix the batter. They poured the batter in baking pans lined with parchment paper. They were shown how to cut the 4 corners with a diagonal cut. This helped the batter form better corners. NOW THE BEST PART, they all got to stick their fingers in the mixing bowl to taste the delicious batter. As we did each step, we taught them the French and English words and they taught us the Creole words. Example, eggs, were oeufs in French, and ze in Creole.

The 4 batters were placed into a 350 degree oven and 20 minutes later the brownies smelled wonderful. After sufficient baking and cooling, Darcy cut the brownies into squares and all the children and staff loved them.

The final event with the children and staff was a group picture in front of their home. They serenaded us with a song called Mesi, (Thank You). It was beautiful, and hard to hold back tears. The children are so beautiful. Most are happy, but some are very sad since they have no "real parents". But they are loved, and Blessed by God.

Now as for the other team, Bob, Rudy, and Double Duty Renee' almost completed the two closets. The closets will be anchored to the walls, the sliding doors hung, and the new closets will be ready for storage.

A great day was had by all, and we finished with the Saturday night Mass in the Chapel. Dinner was served after Mass.

## **February 8, 2015**

### **The trek to La Montagne**

This trip to La Montagne was for Bob and Bertone to do a site visit to a small group of Sisters from the Order of Christ the King. In French the Order is called Crist le Roi. The Sisters have a beautiful house in La Montagne, which is near Jacmel, in the southern shore of Haiti. The view of the Caribbean Sea was breathless. But as the old saying goes, "You can't get there from here", well that was almost true. There were paved and pot holed roads to Jacmel, but the trip up to La Montagne, was severe "off road" driving. We climbed the mountain.

Bob, our mountain climbing driver; Bertone, our Haitian guide; Amber, Darcy, Rudy, Renee', and I all packed into a high wheel based pickup truck (and thank God for that) with Rudy, Renee' and me in the back. The 30 kilometer drive to Jacmel was on a winding mountainous road, which was primarily paved. Picture yourselves driving up to Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The only difference was the motorcycles, tap taps, cars and trucks that were passing us, and we passing them. Passing on a curve? Not a problem! Just blow your horn loud and continuous. And then there is the wildlife. When you get to little communities, dodging goats, pigs, chickens, cattle, dogs, and people were the prime attention getters. By the way, these were the skinniest dogs and cattle that I had ever seen. The goats were well fed since they ate anything.

The scenery was beautiful, however, from a topographical point of view. Haiti, (Ayiti in Creole) is a beautiful mountainous country. But poverty and

minimal living conditions are everywhere. Unless you have traveled here, or to similarly poor African or Indonesian countries, you cannot imagine. In the U.S., only rural Appalachian geography compares to Haiti. Having traveled to all 50 U.S. States, I believe that this is a fair assessment.

Now the thrill, driving off road, way off road, up to mountainous La Montagne. No paved roads here, except for some “hair pin” turns up the side of a mountain. Rainy season storms erode the curves, and without concrete curves, the roads would be impassible. They almost are anyway.

Fortunately, we were bringing padded seat cushions for installation in our Land Rover. Since we had not installed them yet, Darcy suggested putting them in the bed liner of the truck, for whoever was adventurous enough to ride back there. God Bless Darcy for having that foresight. That literally and figuratively saved our butts!! We bone rattled over volcanic rock, eroded trails, through watery creeks and little ponds for every inch of the way. The ride from Jacmel to La Montagne was approximately 5 miles, but it took about 90 minutes to complete. Needless to say we were all happy to exit the truck. Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!

At this point we met four wonderful Sisters, in a beautiful home, funded and built by a Japanese entity in the year 1999. Words cannot describe the beautiful glossy, tiled floors. The house was immaculate. Yet still, pure water and electricity are the challenges. The house had two reservoirs built under it, but only one had some filtration. Electricity was okay for the lights, but ironing was still done with a charcoal heated iron, dating back to the 20's and 30's in the States.

Since our time was limited, Bob started the site visit assessment immediately. We measured the two reservoirs, the size of the house, the length from the entrance gate to the house, and other necessary measurements and information. There were also two 500 or 600 gallon tanks on the roof of the house.



More information was gathered as we enjoyed a wonderful lunch with the Sisters. Bob set the parameters of the project, including the need for Pro Formas and “buy in” on the part of the Sisters. The Head Sister of the Mother House in Port-au-Prince was present. She is supposed to be the decision maker.

Once all information was gathered, Mesi’s (thank you) were exchanged, handshakes and hugs given, we boarded the pickup truck for the bouncy ride back to the monastery. Going back was even bumpier, but for a shorter period of time since Bob, Bertone, and GPS navigated our new way. Yes, you can get good satellite communication even in Haiti.

Amber, Renee’, and Darcy volunteered for the bed of the truck, and as we watched from the front, the ladies bounced, laughed, hung on tight, and laughed some more, all the way home. The guys thought that they were real “troopers”, but I think they thought that they were at Six Flags or something.

After showers, we hustled down to the dining hall and we enjoyed another delicious supper. The evening ended with camaraderie, discussion, and a couple of games of BananaGram. This joyful time was becoming a nightly tradition. God has surely Blessed us with Love and Kindness. Thank you Dear Lord.

## **February 9, 2015**

### **Greve takes over Ayiti**

Greve in Creole means Strike. The Greve is a national protest against the government. Travel throughout the country is not recommended. No one worked, went to school, rode vehicles, or traveled far from home. Violence could break out at anytime, anywhere. So after Matins (morning prayers) we enjoyed a delicious breakfast (dejeuner) of mangos, shadacks (elongated grape fruits), a delicious “grit like” dish, (only better than our grits) and an egg casserole. Best meal yet!

Next, work began on the Land Rover. Bob, Darcy, Rudy, Bertone, and Renee' worked on that. I did a little French to English translation for someone.

We did not leave the secured gates of the monastery until 5 p.m. At that time we drove down to the clinic, which was only about ¼ mile down the hill. We went there to pick up some medicine and to drop off parts at our water purification storage room.

As for the Land Rover, padded seats were retrofitted on both sides, in the back part of the vehicle. The Land Rover can now seat 10 instead of 6. Great design job by Bob, and installation work by the Team Members.

Bob had an afternoon meeting with Frere Jonas, Bertone, and Amber. The remainder of our team joined the meeting as well.

Supper consisted of a scrumptious pasta, and a warm sweet oatmeal type of soup which tasted like warm rice pudding. Plenty of Haitian cane sugar was added.

## **February 10, 2015**

### **And the Greve goes on!**

Day 2 of the Greve, or Strike, still has the country on lock down. Very few cars, trucks, and motor cycles were on the road. In the mountains, away from the city or towns, life went on as usual, except a little slower, a little quieter.

The Mission Team had work to do, however. We drove back down to the clinic to install a control panel for the solar electrical system. The highlight of that task was to shoot RamSet nails into the concrete wall. Bob trained everyone on the use of the RamSet gun, as this fires like a gun, with an ammunition load (22 caliber) and nails as the bullet. When the trigger is pulled, you feel the same recoil as a 38 caliber revolver, and the nail is sent through the wood back panel into the cinder block or concrete wall. For the team members who had fired a firearm or weapon before, it was not a

surprise when you squeezed the trigger. But to Frere Olizard, Bertone and Renee', this was a new experience. Renee's reaction was precious as she SQUEELED LOUDLY when she fired her nail into the wall. But her shot was successful, as was everyone else.

Also in the morning, team members tested the pump at the monastery. It was clogged and it had to be pulled out of a 400' deep well. Once cleaned, it was tested in a 55 gallon drum filled with water. It worked, Voila! Muddy water came out first, followed by clear water. Frere Olizard will re-sink the pump later with his work team.

There was a little trading with a local craftsman, named Louie, then on to dinner. Don't forget, lunch is called dinner in Haiti. It seems like rice, potatoes, pasta, chicken, eggs, soup and tomatoes are served all day, every day. The food is heavily flavored with onions, too. Always tasty, however.

The afternoon was relaxed since most of our work was done at the monastery. Bob did schedule a meeting in the afternoon with Frere Daniel. The subject was Critical Thinking Education. CTE, as I refer to it, is what our U.S. children learn in the earliest grades in school. For example, the ability to solve word problems. i.e.) picture 10 lunch boxes on a table with one window off to the side. The question is which is the third lunch box closest to the window? Easy to answer if we have read the whole question. As adults, if we were planning a 2 week driving vacation around the U.S., do we just jump in the car and start driving? No, we prepare a plan. Where do we want to go? Do we have maps or GPS to guide the way? What do we pack for clothes? How much money do we take with us? Cash? Credit cards? Where do we stay? Camp out or Marriott's? Where do we go if our places to visit are closed down for whatever? Everything that we need for the trip is pre-determined. OK, this is critical thinking. In the U.S. and most advanced countries in the world, that is fundamental in our education and our life experiences. In the Haitian culture, that is NOT the norm. School work, if there is school work, is memorization. Work in general is learned through repetitive habit. But what happens when there is change, is memorization is useless? The people are bewildered. That

was explained to Frere Daniel. We in the U.S. go from Plan A to plans B, or C, or beyond, if necessary. Haitians seem to have trouble with that concept. If it doesn't work, forget about it!!

Bob proposed a workshop for the next visit in June. The purpose is to teach selected teachers and some gifted students who tend to think with CTE. Frere Daniel was receptive to the idea, and Bob will get some U.S. teachers to help design the workshop. Since Frere Daniel speaks only French and Creole, Bob had me work as the translator and he was careful to convey the message of not offending the Brother, or the Haitian people. Bertone was also instrumental in translating into Creole. It was a very good meeting, as our mission team helped with appropriate input.

Later in the afternoon, 5 p.m., the Greve was over and travel was declared safe so we drove back to the orphanage to complete the work of anchoring the two closets. Since this work took only a few people, and a few minutes, most of the team went into the yard to play with the children for one last time.

Amber is called Amba, Darcy is called Dasee, Bob is called Bub, and so on. These are just beautiful children, innocent, and God loving.

There was also a team of 3 missionaries visiting from California. They teach juggling in the Modesto area, and they brought Hula Hoops for the kids. Once the hoops were assembled, Renee', Darcy, and Amber and the two young missionaries from California all played with the kids. The adults wiggled in the Hula Hoops, ran with the kids, carried them, and just loved all over them.

We capped another wonderful day with supper, and our evening retreat to summarize the day, play a few rounds of BananaGram, (something like Scrabble but only better since everyone plays their own tiles at the same time – no waiting), and highlighted by a wonderful Religious discussion. We joined hands and said a final Prayer and off to bed.

**February 11, 2015**

**Travel day to St. Michael-du-Sud**

Finally the Greve (strike) was over. Most of the violence reported was in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. We will see for ourselves tomorrow, as we head to the airport.

Today, our last work day, we drove west to St. Michael-du-Sud. Sud is French for south. The 1 ½ hour drive along the Gulf of Gonave was beautiful. The land is a long peninsula going west with the Caribbean Sea to our south.

The school that we went to was run by Catholic Sisters. Bob had previously installed a pure water system there. This time, we were going to install a new 500 gallon water tank on the roof of a building that housed another large water tank. We had to run PVC water lines from the tank to the present hand fed water pump, run electrical wire, and install a new pump head with shut off valves. The total run for the PVC and electrical wire was 250 feet. Local workers had dug a trench 6 inches wide by 6 inches deep, all by hand, using picks to break through the concrete. Other work was to install new wiring for the Delco generator, and install some new control panels.

Most of this work was completed in our 8 hour day, except for the pump head. We needed a TRI-Pod and pulley to pull the pump out of the well. The pump is down about 150 feet or so. It could not be done by hand. Bertone will take the right equipment and a work crew to do this after we are gone.

We ran the water lines and the electrical wire in the trench for the 250 feet. All the PVC, and shut off valves were installed to the new water tank by our three lady engineers, Renee', Amber, and Darcy.

Our six team members, plus Bertone and Charles, Bertone's helper, were all treated to a delicious dinner/lunch, highlighted by Bob's surprise of Chocolate and Vanilla Ice Cream. Crème Glasser in French and Creole.

After a fun ride back in the bed of the pickup truck, we stopped to get diesel and Bertone bought everyone some sugar cane. The outside of the

sugar cane was stripped with a machete, and then cut into 8 inch segments. You then had to bite off a piece of the cane with your back teeth, and chew the sweet juice out of that bit off piece. You then spit out the fibrous cane. It was not as sweet as I expected, but delicious none the less.

Once back to the monastery, we cleaned up for our last supper together. We truly bonded as a Team of 7, including Bertone who was with us most of the time.

Bob, Amber, Darcy, Rudy, Renee', and I also shared Prayer, meal time, travel, critical thinking discussions, BananaGram, and nightly Religious discussions.

From a personal standpoint, I can sum up this week with one word, RETREAT. We shared the Love of God, and one another. We shared, Prayer, serving our little children, serving our Brothers and Sisters, humor (lots and lots of humor), and this was done all day long. I LOVE my TEMMATES. "Mwen renmen M frè ak se".

## **February 12, 2015**

### **Return to Huntsville Travel Day**

We started the trip home by packing and re-packing last evening. We each came to Haiti with two checked bags, and one carryon bag. After dropping off supplies, we were now able to get down to one checked bag, and one carry on. Luggage handling was much easier, and lighter, by over 300 lbs.

Travel day started with morning Matins, breakfast, final packing, vehicle loading, and our ride to Port-au-Prince. We hugged and wished the Brothers good bye, and thanked them for their hospitality. Au devoir!

On the ride to the airport, we did not see any ill effects from the Greve. It was business as usual for the Haitian people.

When we arrived 8 days ago, I just took in all the sights, sounds, and driving habits of the Haitians. It was just like driving in Boston, except even more aggressive. Today, on the way back to the airport, I was specifically looking for remaining damage from the January 12, 2010 earthquake that killed over 250,000 poor people. It is hard to believe, but there are still collapsed structures from 5 years past. It is pitiful to see that. Things happen very slowly in Haiti, except for the driving of course. If they worked like they drove, this might be a progressive country. Also, the poverty makes the people aggressive to sell you anything. If you slowed down in traffic, someone was trying to sell you mangos, water, sugar cane, etc. That is their only way to earn some money to survive.

Now the “fun” part, check in at Delta Airlines. Surprisingly, this went smoothly. No major lines or problems, since most of the foreign travelers are mainly missionaries. The jet to and from Atlanta was just partially populated. You could sit just about anywhere except business class.

The real pain in the neck is getting through customs in Terminal E in Atlanta. We were in line for almost an hour. Once through, we picked up our luggage and proceeded to the Delta station for connecting flights. We just dropped off our previously inspected bags with the agents. No problem there. However, from Port-au-Prince to Atlanta, we must have gone through security 6 times.

Once inside the terminal for our connecting flight, Bob treated the team to dinner at the Longhorn Steakhouse. At dinner (no more supper here), Bob asked us two questions: (1) what was our key moment or special activity for the week? (2) what improvement or changes would we recommend for future mission trips? Everyone talked about their best moments, and being with the children was a high priority and reward. There were other highlights offered, as well.

It was hard to tell Bob how to improve a process that he has perfected. Things happen so slowly in Haiti, or language communications create gaps in information exchange, that Critical Thinking then takes over. Bob’s pre-plan

was all laid out prior to coming, but the unexpected Greve sent Plan "A" and "B" to Plans "X,Y,and Z". A strike to shut down a country for two days, who would have thunk it? The ability to change courses allowed us to complete possibly 85% of our tasks. My only suggestion was to have an early reception at the monastery so that we could meet all the Brothers, Sisters, nurses, and key staff people when a Mission Team arrived. This would smooth the way for introductions and responsibilities.

Renee' headed off to her Pittsburg bound aircraft after serious hugs and good byes. She is a wonderful young lady. Much love to Renee'.

In conclusion, the Team was very harmonious, and we were busy every day. We arrived in Huntsville on time to the open arms of our wives, in Bob's, Rudy's, and my case. God really watched over us, and Blessed us accordingly. We will conclude this trip with a Mardi Gras party on "Fat Tuesday". Just in time for us to prepare for our Lenten Devotion. Thanks be to God.

Humbly,

Lou Galipeau