

I always learn new things on my trips to Haiti and this visit was no exception.

Word reached me a few days before I left the US that there had been an accident, a wheel came off of the car, and two Little Sisters had died. When I arrived, I could see that many of the Sisters had been affected. The general greeting in Haiti is “kouman ou ye” how are you. The response is always “pa pi mal” literally meaning not too bad or ok. This time when I said Kouman ou ye, the Sisters responded “soeur mouri” the Sisters are dead. More Sisters died in the earthquake but I think because they were still in shock, they did not have a similar response. I shared the news of the accident with some friends here before I left and a wonderful man handed me a hundred dollar bill and said to use it for something that made the Sisters feel better – flowers, food, wine, etc. The head of the order said it should be food. So, when many Sisters were gathered in the refectory, I told them the story of the man who wanted them to feel better and presented the \$100 bill to Sr. Hermione who is the head of the kitchen. Smiles and applause broke out. I think knowing that this man cared about them seemed to be as great a comfort as the food.

I also talked with the head of the order about wearing seatbelts. This is not a common practice in Haiti. Many of their vehicles do not have operable ones but a few do. The Sister even commented that one car cries when you do not put on the seatbelt. She said she would talk with the other Sisters about this.

Most of my time was spent with students and some of their families. We have over 200 students now. All but 5% passed the last school year. Those that didn't succeed (most of them primary students) will repeat their grades. Most of the secondary students successfully advanced to the next grade. Some that completed their last year would like to attend university, but we cannot accept new students at upper levels until some students complete their studies due to financial constraints.

Garline, one of our university students studying nursing has just graduated first in her class. We are so proud of her. Robenson Louis,

one of our university scholarship students studying education administration has written a book. It's in French so it will take me a while to get through it. He said it was about Haiti 20 years ago and 20 years in the future.

When a student begins their university studies with one of our scholarships, I explain that they never have to repay any of the money they are given. However, after they have graduated and have employment, they must help another Haitian get an education. Thus far almost all of our 25 graduates have abided by this contract. Some have even brought the child they are helping to meet me with great pride and one has taken in a child he found on the road.

The handicapped children living at the orphanage can continue their education as well as others handicapped children in the area. The orphanage will also have \$415 US per month to buy food for the children. This is thanks to a grant by Santana's Milagro Foundation.

I delivered 2 big bags of pens and pencils from a school in Kansas City to the principal at Riviere Froide. There were many happy students!

Being in Haiti means you are constantly setting priorities. I think my conversation with a father and his sons is typical. We've been helping a few of his sons with scholarships periodically and helping fix their house which is still damaged from the earthquake in 2010. This time I said that they needed to choose how to use the money: send 1 son to school and use the rest to work more on the house, or send 2 sons to school and fix the house a little, or send no sons to school and fix the house. Their decision was 1 son and fixing the house. Then they discussed which son and decided on the one with the best prospects. Another instance is deciding whether to use money for food or education.

I would like to say that all our stories have happy endings but this would be false. We are seeing success and many of them but sometimes things happen that are sad to me. A few of our students have died and some have made poor choices. I have decided to risk telling you about some of them so that you might understand Haiti more fully.

-Two students got pregnant. One continued on in school after a break and graduated

and the other asked that her scholarship money be used for her two little sisters.

-One student left the country and his family after graduation.

-Two scholarship students, one university and one professional school, got caught up in bad voodoo. I know this is difficult for us to understand. In Haiti there are two official religions, Catholic and Voodoo. There are two kinds of Voodoo. One comes from cultural traditions in Africa and incorporates nature and a belief in the Divine. It has wonderful music usually with drumming and is a comfort to many. The other is a misuse of that. Unfortunately, it is the latter that we think of due to misinformation in movies, etc. A bad voodoo priest told the students that they would be rich if they killed two people. Luckily, this plan was discovered and never carried out. The young men were sent away by the community where they lived. This was a rude awakening for me. Neither of these students have any family for support or other people they are close to. From now on, if I know that a student is in this situation, we will try to find someone to mentor them so they are not forced to make so many decisions on their own.

When we go to another country, we try to learn about the culture to better understand it. Over my many years in Haiti I have continually been amazed at the strength of the people. They have been repeatedly faced with unbelievable challenges and keep coming back. Whatever helps keep up their courage is fine by me.

Here comes a real change of pace...I always see a lot of lizards in Haiti. Some are over a foot long – generally outside. Then there are lots of smaller ones on the walls and ceilings inside. I have always welcomed the lizards as I know they eat insects and I can do with less of them, especially mosquitos. Well, this time I kept hearing what sounded like a new bird sound very close by. It was kind of a soft chirping sound. It turned out to be coming from the lizards. One night when Natalie (my roommate) and I had finally climbed into bed, we heard the lovely little sound again and I decided they were saying good night to us and I quietly utter “bon appetite”.

I spent most of my time at Riviere Froide because so many of the Sisters came there for two ceremonies and I could get information about the

missions easily. They had a celebration of 4 Sisters making their vows and 14 at various stages of preparation for entrance into the order. They also honored 5 Sisters who have been in the order for 50 years. What an accomplishment this is! Many Sisters also came back to the Motherhouse for the funeral.

The rioting that occurred earlier in the summer is over. The government did not raise gas prices. The Haitian currency continues to be degraded which of course raises prices. So far they have escaped the hurricanes this season.

Your donations are funding student scholarships, food, medical expenses and repairing houses. Without them the lives of the peasants we help would be even more difficult than they are. Everyone in Haiti asked me to send their thanks and let you know that they are very grateful.

The Little Sisters work with the poor. It is difficult for them to keep all of their schools, clinics, hospitals, orphanages, etc. open when many people coming to them cannot pay. The programs that are most difficult to keep going are their Professional Schools. These are similar to trade schools. These schools often require costly equipment, materials and teachers. One of these schools has even written up a plan to start a little furniture factory to help underwrite the school. Since all of these schools teach students to make things: food, dresses, tiling, walls, furniture, etc., I think this model could be used to assure the continuation of these valuable programs. We of course need the start up funds to accomplish this.

I brought back lots of nice things and will be selling at the following places:

-Nov. 3, 10:00AM-5:00PM – San Rafael Goldenaires Craft Fair, 618 B St., San Rafael, CA

-Nov. 4, 8:00AM-1:00PM – St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church – 1550 Diablo Rd., Danville, CA

-Nov. 10, 5:00PM-6:30PM - Newman Hall, 2700 Dwight Way, Berkeley, CA

-Nov. 11, 7:00AM-1:00PM, 4:00PM-7:00PM

Thank you for your continued interest in Haiti.

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No photos this time – saving ink.