

HAITI 2004

On February 1, 2004, the U.S. Consulate in Haiti was sending families back to the States and **strongly urged Americans NOT TO TRAVEL to Haiti**. It was the same day eleven members of Our Lady of the Lady Catholic Church in Hendersonville boarded American Airline Flight 1291 for Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They were on a medical missionary trip to St. Bertin a church on the north shore, just a few miles from Cap Haitien. Unfortunately, none of the travelers nor their families were aware of the serious political situation developing in Haiti for outside of the main cities little contact with the outside world was difficult. Families back home had to just wait and hope that no news was good news.



The group was lucky to have decided to travel between Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien by Caribintair rather than drive. Aside from the travel being uncomfortable, Gonaïves on the road went under siege and fell to rioters on February 4'th. Eleven more towns fell as they departed the island on February 8'th.

We selected pictures to document this trip from the hundreds taken by several of the ladies which they posted in their photo albums on the WEB. We hope they don't mind our using the images primarily relating to Sharyn.

The story of the trip of the Medical Team has five more pages. Move from page to page by clicking your mouse on the hyper-links, similar to the one immediately below.



Donna Coker, RN; Sharyn Evans, RN; Kim Fox; Laurie Gibbs, RN; Tom Gautsch, MD; Arlene Gomez, Felicia Janco, RN; Don LaFont, MD; Patty Murphy, RN; Sharon Scruggs, and Joyce Stelzer spent a week at St. Bertin in Port-de-Paix caring to the medical needs on the tiny community, the parishioners, and school children served by the sister church of Our Lady of the Lake.

On February 1, 2004, at the Nashville Airport everyone seems a little sleepy, since their journey commenced at 4:30AM, but what awaits them?



Plane arrives safely at Port-au-Prince at shortly at 1:30 PM.



Now the job is to get personal belongings and a ton of medical supplies through customs.



Next stop is Cap Haitien on the north shore of Haiti. Transportation fortunately is via Caribintair



Ladies and gentlemen your tapa-tapa awaits for your trip west along the north shore to Port-de-Paix



Whether you are going or coming, the picture is the same. However, below is how everyone looked after a week,



LIVING AT ST. BERTIN

Here is home for the next week. The ladies dorm is in the upper right hand corner.



Ladies bedroom awaits. Sharyn found the bed in the back corner to her liking. I guess her choice was so no one could hear her crying.





St. Bertin was both simple on the outside and inside, but adequate for the parishioners needs.



St. Bertin children attend school . . .

. . . in very smart blue uniforms for higher grades.



. . . and pink uniforms for younger grades.
Fortunately, this boy doesn't know pink is for girls.

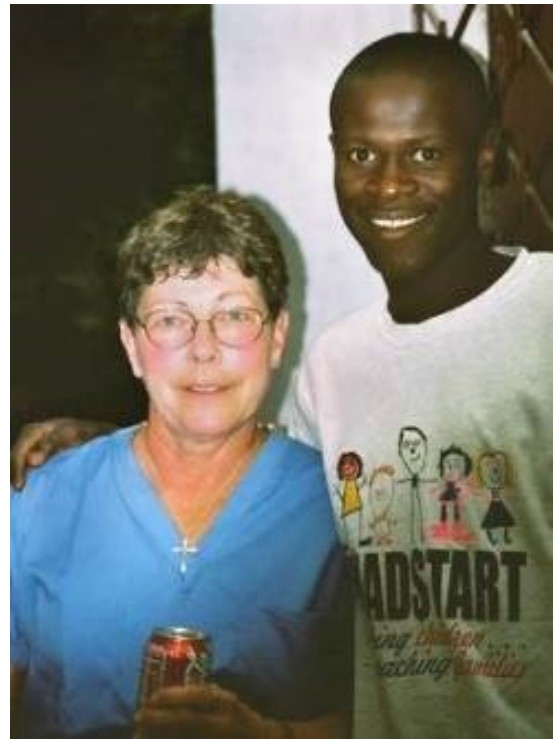
A new school is in construction.



Fr. Gabriel keeps it all together.



Sharyn with Mackinsey, an interpreter from the visitation house.



Meals are served on the veranda



And then, the alarm clock starts each day at dawn



IN TOWN

On February 1, the group walk into a nearby tiny town to provision their stay.



Goats on the front steps of this Haitian home ignore those passing by.



However, like a bright white road sign, the medical group appear different to these folks.



A young boy *points* the way.



Group arrives in town. . .



and Allison does some picture taking. . .



and smoozing.



and mixing batter for the daily bread.



Meat for dinner. . .



Natives are friendly.



Les Trois Rivières is nearby.



CLINIC

Fr. Gabriel gather patients outside the little clinic.



Young and old move inside patiently to wait their turn



The queues seem endless.



The medical team works tirelessly. . .



with both parishioners and with school children.



Somebody told dancing doctor Tom, the end of the queue was near, but they need to tell zombie Sharyn.



Hopefully, the makeshift pharmacy has enough medicines for people with special needs such as our lady with gout.



AS A TOURIST

People willing to ignore comfort, safety, and wealth to care selflessly for others are rare. Their rewards come from the satisfaction in serving and from the pleasure in sharing an experience, a brief moment in time, with others so wonderfully gifted. If we are lucky, they have touched our life in some manner, as a parent, a teacher, a spouse, or a close friend.

Sadly, so many of our neighbors strive selfishly to demonstrate importance through luxurious cars, extravagant houses, and exclusive social memberships. Fortunately with less myopia, our special friends recognize that their worth is measured not by ostentation but by gifts to better the life of others and that spiritual peace derives not from a count of church attendance, but from a knowledge of having left, in their own unique way, that feeling of worth in the heart of another.

A tourist to Haiti most likely sees the country in a different manner. The medical group in did get to enjoy the peasures of Hotel Montana for an afternoon and left at 3PM February 8 just before the whole country came under seige



