

Bonjour,

After a lovely morning drive down the Gorge from The Dalles, I parked my car near the airport in Portland on May 9th and headed for the airport. By evening, I was at our hotel in Ft. Lauderdale with my teammates. Bruce and I had gone to Haiti together, last May, but the others were new to me. Bob, our leader, met us at the hotel - he's from Bluffton, OH, just a few miles from my childhood home of Lima. Joel is from Michigan and restores classic cars for a living. David lives in Sisters, OR, just down the road from our new home in TD - David grew up in Haiti with his missionary family and is fluent in Creole.

Next morning, Sunday, after hot showers and breakfast, we headed to the airport for our Lynx Air flight to Cap Haitien. The flight to CH was calm and beautiful, with an easy landing on the single airstrip in the second (or third) largest city in Haiti. Our good friends, Rick and Debbie Hutchinson, along with Pastor Gelin, picked us up and took us out to their compound for the evening. The road from the airport to their house has improved dramatically since my first trip there two and a half years ago - the $\frac{3}{4}$ hour drive over dirt and ruts has been cut to $\frac{1}{4}$ hour, thanks to pavement. After a quick lunch of rice and beans, we headed out to look at a few local wells, and ended up replacing loose handles on a couple of them. We also visited the coast where a couple of Food for the Poor boats were tied up on the beach, and a nearby well was working fine. Popcorn for a late snack was welcome, back at the house.

Monday morning, we headed out early for Gonaives - this city, the second (or third) largest in Haiti, was brutally hit by numerous hurricanes and a tropical storm, last summer. The 60 mile drive there takes 5 hours - we drove through beautiful mountains, some pretty much denuded while others were green - as we neared Gonaives, the mountains became more and more barren and rocky. Parts of the road and many bridges were washed away and new gravel roads had been bull-dozed into service. We would be staying as guests at the compound of Dr. Luc, who greeted us on our arrival. Our Haitian companions were Pastor Gelin, chauffeur and pump repairer extraordinaire, Cedodo, a wonderful companion and pump repairer,

and Telin, our cook, house keeper and friend.

After a quick lunch, we headed out to fix our first 2 wells - they were pretty close by (30 minutes away?) and we completed them with no problems. The first well had a Food for the Poor plaque on it - the bottom pipe had split and the locals were very glad to have their well back in working order. A new technique, since my last trip, involves running a submersible pump, connected to a garden hose, down into the wells and pumping it until the water runs clean - having running water coming out of a hose, on a hot day, led to some hi-jinks, as well. The second well had a disconnected rod, at the cylinder, but was also an easy fix and the locals were again very glad to have clean water once again - it hadn't worked for 3 years. A church, looking down on the well, had been destroyed by one of the hurricanes. That night, after bucket showers, Telin prepared beans and rice, fried plantain and mangoes for us - delicious.

Next morning, Tuesday, we got an early start and headed out past the 2 repaired wells for 2 more. The first well, we named Paradise, because it was under 4 huge mango trees, which provided comfort from the sun. The second well was out in the open and we slowly cooked as we repaired that one - thank goodness for #50 sunscreen. That was it for wells on that road, so we turned back, had lunch at Paradise, and then headed out the road from Gonaives, where we found a difficult well along the road, next to a soccer field. Gelin did some expert fishing for us (pipe was disconnected and down the hole) and we finally pulled everything out - thought we were in for smooth sailing. But no, we started to lower the submersible into the well, and it got totally jammed, about 15 feet down. Couldn't budge it in either direction and eventually the rope connecting us to it snapped, striking Cedodo in the face, dangerously close to his eye. After numerous attempts we finally had to abandon the submersible to the bottom of the well - one strong whack on a metal pipe, and off it went. We then completed the pump repair, but our high spirits were temporarily doused by the loss of the submersible. That night, after rice and beans, etc., and bucket showers we headed to bed early, in preparation for more travel in the morning.

Wednesday morning, after eggs, spaghetti and bread, we head east to Anse Rouge - the drive along the coast was spectacular, although we first passed through a large, large area that was used as a mud dump. Thousands of dump truck loads of mud, removed from the homes, streets and environs of Gonaives were dumped out here, and the trucks were still dumping as we drove by. After passing this area, we drove through a very desolate area - lots of cactus, bare mountains, and Haitian homes with no visible signs of water or food - all with the sea alongside the road. Then came a large solar salt production area and a single hummingbird, visiting a cactus flower. On the way back, I spotted a weaver bird (Madam Sara) tree. It's a 3 hour drive to Anse Rouge, which is a fairly large village with 3 central wells - one was working and the other 2 were down. Don't ask me how the people survive there, because I couldn't tell you. Once again under the hot sun, we fixed those 2 wells, as well as replacing the chain on the 3rd well.

Heading back out of town, we stopped at an orphanage, to repair well number 8 - our most difficult well to date. There was 110' of iron pipe in the well, which we pulled by hand - no relief from the sun, but we could duck into a nearby building where we were serenaded by a resident choir of Haitian girls. We ended up putting back in 180' of PVC pipe - the surface level of the water was at 140' (or so) and we drove home, after more songs, with a song in our hearts. I shared my testimony with Bob, standing on the bed of the truck - long version, but a good way to better bond. That night we had beans and rice, pickly (spicy slaw), fried okra and mangos - yum.

Next morning, Thursday, after our usual breakfast, we drove through Gonaives and headed west on the main road to Port au Prince - the road had been severely damaged by hurricanes and one stretch, near a large lake was completely gone - more bull-dozing had created a decent by-pass. We were going to l'Esther, based on the advice/encouragement of a pastor that Dr. Luc knew - reader beware. At the first two stops, there were no wells and the pastor seemed surprised. The third stop was at a dug well - we don't fix those. The fourth stop was to view a French pump that was working, and besides, we couldn't repair it if it needed to be. Ah me, tensions/tempers were

flaring - had we come all the way out here for this? And then, Rick offered the suggestion that we pray - duh - and he prayed a wonderful prayer of peace and reconciliation - the first words that came to my mind were ' the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'

Peace did come upon us, and we drove off to find 2 wells in need of repair - the first was wedged in between walls in the village - hadn't worked for some time, but as we drove away, the smiles on the villagers faces told the story. The second well was in a school yard - the hurricane had sunk the pad by about 8 inches - we agreed to repair it based on their promise to re-cement the pad. In the end, we did some pretty creative work there. We raised the well head by taking 2 old reservoirs, removing the spouts and pounding them closed (thanks to Joe our body work man), piping them together, top to bottom, and then securing the new reservoir to the bottom of the old one - confused? The bolt holes line up different on the tops and bottoms of a reservoir, but by flipping that middle one, we were in good shape and had raised the top of the well by 10 inches - plenty of height for the new pad.

Leaving there, we repaired another school well, 38' total depth. By then many of us were shaky from heat and exhaustion, but we got the job done and then headed further west to Dessalines to scout out the water situation there. David had lived in Dessalines for a while with his wife - she was a nurse and worked at the local hospital - David met a man who now was a director at the hospital - his wife had taught him English as a boy. It was pretty neat seeing them talking together after all of those years.

There are no wells in the Dessalines area - they use springs (and probably river water) but it was a beautiful drive in an increasingly heavy rain. The river was rising fast and on the way back, at a low spot in the new road, we basically drove through a quarter mile of new river that was bent on removing the road. One car was already off the road, resting on its nose, and the water was the color of chocolate milk - after some nerve-wracking travel and expert driving by Rick and Gelin, we made it back to our home in Gonaives. Bucket showers, rice and beans (or was it beans and rice?), and late night discussions of

the events of the day - tomorrow, we're heading back to Cap Haitien. We've done a lot of traveling and still have 11 wells repaired.

Friday morning, Rick tells us about a fortuitous—or should I say heavenly—reminder he received in the night - somewhere out among the piles of mud, there was a well that needed to be repaired. So, after breakfast (guess what we had), we headed back out on the road to Anse Rouge and sure enough we came to a sad little well, across the road from the mud dump. It hadn't worked in years and the 1500 people who would use it had been going elsewhere for a long time. To the delight of the locals, we made short work of pulling it, base and all, and replacing everything - brand new. Lots of water, too. We started a new pad for them and left money for its completion - cement doesn't grow on trees, even if there were trees.

Back to the house, finish loading the trucks and back on the road to CH - over the mountains, past a new truck hulk that hadn't made it down successfully, and on into the compound in time for beans and rice, canned fish, fried okra, etc. Real showers (cold) and games of Quiddler - I highly recommend it if you haven't tried it. Tomorrow, Saturday, we'd work on a couple of local wells to finish off the week.

Saturday morning, we head for Grand Riviere, which is on the way to Pignon (last May's trip). For some reason, there was a road grader and steam roller working on one stretch of the road - will wonders never cease. Our first well was at a large school and the second one was beside a small dirt road - it had been repaired recently by LWI, but weak, malfunctioning couplers had failed and there was a disconnect. Rick thinks they discovered the coupler problem early on and hopefully not too many other wells will fail - a good test of the grapevine, perhaps.

Lastly, we made a valiant attempt to repair a well that had pipe jammed in tight and disconnected. Gelin once again succeeded in snagging it, but we couldn't budge it - not by hand, not by tripod and not by truck - we had to leave it for another day and more inspirational engineering. Oh well. On the way back we were nearly run off the road by a motorcade of speeding UN jeeps and an apparent dignitary - initial

rumors that it was Michelle Obama were soon laid to rest - it was the Haitian prime minister on his way to some important event - remember the road grader, by the way?

Rick and David and I drove into CH to visit Fr. Noe and look at his compound and his well. St. Paul's is putting together a trip there in late December, early January. We'd met Fr. Noe in Petit Trou - he's the Episcopal priest in CH - small world. Janet and I will be leading that trip and I know for sure that many lives will be changed as a result of it.

Rick says that we drove, conservatively, 21 hours - far more than any other trip that I've been on. We completely repaired 14 wells which will be used by 28,400 people (estimate, of course), and we did minor repairs on 3 other wells. On Sunday, we worshipped in Creole at Pastor Gelin's church and enjoyed dinner, overlooking the bay, at Hotel Mont Jolli. Then, back to the compound for packing up and another game of Quiddler.

Monday morning, we're off to the airport for a flight through the clouds to Ft. L., saying goodbye to new and dear friends, on to Houston with Bruce with a final good bye there. After a long flight to Portland, I spent the night there - no need to drive the CRG (Columbia River Gorge) that late at night - and I'm home for breakfast by 8:00 am with Janet and friends at Cousins (some of you know about Cousins, right?). The one hour drive through the Gorge is about the same distance as the 5 hour drive to Gonaives. It's always amazing to come back to the comforts and safety of home—our roads, water, general well being—while bringing with me the knowledge and experience of the troubles of Haiti, but the joys, love and faith of her people. Basically, though, I'm back in the swing of things here, even though it'll take a few days to catch up on sleep and get rid of the aches. But I'm already looking forward to my next LWI trip in Nov.-Dec.

Again, I thank my teammates for their friendship and support on this trip, I thank Rick and Debbie, Gelin, Cedodo and Telin for their loving support and fellowship, I thank all of you who prayed for us while we were traveling and working in Haiti, and I thank those of you who

could provide financial support for the trip. Most of all, I thank the people of Haiti who warmly welcomed us to their country, and who accepted what we had to offer - life giving, clean water, and the Living Water that comes from a source far greater than us.

**Avec amour,
Ron**