

Bonjour,

I have once again returned from a Living Water International (LWI) trip to Haiti to repair wells, and would like to share some of the highlights with you. I'll also be talking a little about our upcoming trip to visit and work with Fr. Noe Bernier in Cap Haitian – coming right up in January.

You can go to this link, [November 2009 LWI Trip](#), to follow along with pictures.

Once again I took the lovely drive down the Columbia River Gorge from The Dalles to the Portland – Sunday morning, November 29th, and again I was at our hotel in Ft. Lauderdale with my teammates late that evening. Bruce and I, still on Pacific Time, went out to eat at Lester's Diner, and so we were in bed by midnight. The rest of our team included Jim, our fearless leader from Michigan, and Steve, from Wisconsin. The other three, Barry, Wade and Jake, are from Haliburton, Canada, and represent Water Ambassadors. Jake, a very mature 17-year old, was a real blessing to us and everyone he met on this trip.

Next morning, Monday, after hot showers and breakfast, we headed to the airport for our Lynx Air (or Florida Coastal) flight to Cap Haitien. After a couple of hours of delays, we boarded the plane and were ready to go – we were, but alas, the plane was not. Turns out that a starter-generator had failed on the right engine and we weren't going anywhere that day – by the time repairs could be completed it would be too dark to land in Haiti, where run-way lights are non-existent. By next morning, the repairs were complete and the crew had actually flown to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and back during the night.

Lest you think that we just sat around in our hotel rooms that night, we didn't. We took a shuttle to the Fr. Lauderdale beach, walked bare-foot in the waves and dined at a seafood restaurant, Café Del Mar, overlooking the surf. As it grew dark, we watched the largest cruise ship in the world take its maiden cruise, 4 miles off the beach. We were treated to a spectacular fireworks display, which is how we

knew how far off the ship was. The next day, that ship would be heading to Labadie, Haiti – sort of ironic, I guess.

Our Tuesday flight to CH was again delayed, but we eventually made it with a pit-stop in Exuma, Bahamas – no fuel in Haiti. The plane, a Swiss SA-340A, was considerably larger than the previous one, with 2 turbo-props and more importantly, a restroom – yes! Rick and Pastor Gelin, along with some other Haitian friends, picked us up and took us out to their compound for the evening. Unlike the last trip which involved several long drives, we would be commuting from the compound each day – Excellent news! We had lost one day due to the aforementioned travel difficulties, and would only have 4 working days, so the reduced travel time while we were there was a blessing.

Wednesday morning, after 6:30 devotions and breakfast, we headed to a nearby village named Paulette (1 hour drive?) – we soon learned that this village had only one well, which wasn't working. The 2000 residents were required to walk 30 minutes, one-way, to another village where they paid 1 gourde for each gallon of water, and then carry it home. Repairing that well was pretty straight-forward, and we were introduced to a new and improved cleaning technique - if you remember, last trip we lost our cleaning pump down a well near Gonaive. Now, the new pump is attached to rigid, 10' PVC pipe and we run it at each 10' level all the way to the bottom – this particular well was 43' deep. The results are pretty remarkable – at each level the muddy water soon becomes clear. It does take a lot of extra time to clean the wells, but it is well worth it. Steve had brought along quite a few soccer balls, basketballs and footballs, and these were passed out, along with hand-pumps, at each well. It was great to see the eyes of the kids light up as they received and played with these gifts.

While putting this well back together, we hit a snag – we couldn't get 40' of pipe to go all the way down into the 43' well. After trial #1, we pulled it all back out, said a prayer for guidance, and put it back in – hitting the same snag. After some rotating of the pipe and a few up and down actions, it suddenly slid all the way down.

After completing the installation we handed the well over to the grateful community and headed out for a quiet lunchtime spot in the road. Wednesday afternoon found us at a well alongside a main drag in Terrier Rouge, where I had worked before on an earlier trip. Terrier Rouge is considerably larger than Paulette, and this wasn't the only well in town, but it was capped, with no hand pump attached. We learned that a local man had pulled out the PVC pipe, and while replacing it with steel, he had lost everything down the well, so a fishing expedition was in order. Jim is a great fisherman, and had soon caught the top of the pipe in his 'contraption'. With a lot of massive heaving, we soon had everything out. During that time we met a whole bunch of wonderful new friends. Jake was well received by the youth at every site and quickly made friends, despite language barriers. We'd return to this well the next day to clean it out and put the new parts all back together.

That night we enjoyed our rice and beans, played some card games (Up the River, Down the River) and talked into the late hours. Bob, our leader from the last team, had arrived during the day – he is a contractor and has a vision of repairing a large 2-story building on the compound property. It is in pretty bad shape, but Bob is sure that a combination of hard work and good supplies will turn it into a large facility for visiting teams of missionaries. With some brainstorming from Jim and Rick, Bob soon had some names of people who would probably want to join him with this venture.

Thursday morning was announced bright and early by Rick's main rooster, Big Boy II, and the pretenders to the throne. After our breakfast of strong coffee, boiled eggs and spaghetti, we headed back to Terrier Rouge, where an eager crowd soon gathered to watch the proceedings. Once again, the lengthy cleaning process produced dramatic results, and we completed the repairs as footballs flew overhead. We continued down the dirt road to Grand Bassin and checked out a broken well, there. They will have to repair the cement slab to prevent ground water from entering into the well – it'll be fixed at a later date. We left Grand Bassin, down the same road, to a well that was situated beside a Manyok (cassava) factory – it was working, weakly, so we decided to give it a shot. By evening, we'd pulled the

old well, 70' of steel, and had nearly completed the cleaning, but at the bottom of the well we started pumping out a greenish, slimy mud. As it was nearing dusk, we told the locals that we'd be back in the morning to complete our work. This well would only produce about 2-gallons of water a minute, but that's still better than nothing.

On our way by well #2, a woman who was pumping caught sight of us and yelled out her gratitude to us – I know that she was speaking for the whole village when she called out “Thank you, every one of you – may God bless you all” – that made the whole trip worthwhile for me. Thursday night was pretty much like Wednesday night – we tried out a game of Scum (?) – you have a President, a VP, some local folks, a VP-of-Scum and the Head Scum – seems like I spent a lot of time in that chair, but it was fun and the conversation was lively. Most of us made an earlier departure to bed that night.

Friday morning found us out on the road to the 3rd well at the Manyok processing plant. We quickly finished our work there, headed back to the Terrier Rouge Carrefour (fork in the road), and headed down a long dirt road to the village of Donda, which is at the end of the road, next to a fairly large river. The road reminded me of the road between Anse Vous and Petit Trou – beautiful scenery, with mountains running beyond mountains. On the way there, we came upon a work crew that had felled a tree, for charcoal, across the road. We ate lunch while they hacked away with machetes and an axe to clear the road – the noontime temperature was around 105° F.

Donda has 2 wells – one was barely working and the other was completely broken. We thought about starting on the broken well, but were told that it wasn't as good as the other – could we fix that one first? So, we pulled out all of the old parts and began the cleaning process. While part of the team continued with cleaning, the rest of us walked over to the other well, and took it apart – it was only 40' deep with 21' of water. We wouldn't be able to complete this well, that day, and so we decided that we'd bump our way back on Saturday. So, after completing the repairs on the 4th well, I gave a brief talk to the villagers on who we were, and why we were there. There are 2 kinds of water that we are interested in – one which comes from the well

and quenches your thirst for a few hours, and another kind, Living Water, that will last you into eternity (see John 4:10-14).

We bumped our way back to Terrier Rouge, past the busy well alongside the road, and back to the compound for another evening of good food and good company. Saturday was our last work day – I rode in the back of the truck with Jim, enjoying the morning air and Jim’s company. It takes about 2 hours to get back to Donda, and the well in Terrier Rouge was quite active as we went by. Something remarkable happened at that last well, though. As we cleaned it out, we soon discovered that the water would become crystal clear and we were able to pump at 10-gallons per minute, forever - hard working hand pumpers normally pump at 5-gallons per minute, max. What we thought would be a sub-par well turned out to be the best of the 5 – the lesson here is “don’t judge by outward appearances; look at the inside, at the heart.”

We had a good time with the villagers of Donda, too. Jake was invited to tour the village with his new friends, and we watched the hard working women doing their laundry in the river – sheets and linens were laid out on sandy beach to dry. I got to visit with a young mother of 3 – language barriers didn’t seem to be a problem for any of us. We headed home with joy in our hearts, which was again raised as we drove by our 2nd well in Terrier Rouge – still busy, with some laundry work going on there, as well.

Back at the compound, we unloaded the trucks, cleaned up, and headed into Cap Haitien for our celebration dinner at the Hotel Mont Jolli. Rick spotted Fr. Noe, walking along the street, and I told him that we’d be back after our dinner to discuss our January trip – which brings me to a brief aside in this report.

Janet and I will be leading a first-time trip from the Diocese of Eastern Oregon to work with Fr. Noe Bernier in Cap Haitien. Our team will consist of 8 people from St. Paul’s, a friend, Fabian, from Bonanza, OR, and two friends, Andy and Yvonne, from Lakewood, CO. Our goal is to get some medical and educational work done, but more importantly to begin to develop long-term relationships with the Haitian people in the

Cap Haitien area. We'll be staying at Fr. Noe's house, which is at the site of a 1000-student technical school. A short distance away is the CH Episcopal Church and an elementary school for ~600 young students. Fr. Noe also has 3 other churches in nearby villages. In case you're interested, the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, with +180,000 members, is the largest diocese, by numbers, in the Episcopal church (of North America). I/we will be writing a separate trip report after we return in January.

Oh, one other thing – Fr. Noe is looking for someone to come over and teach English. I'm not totally clear on the details, but I believe the work would start in March and might last 3 months? If you or someone you know is interested, get in touch with me. I would assume that this is a volunteer position.

On Sunday, we again worshipped in Creole at Pastor Gelin's church, packed up and headed off to the airport for a (late, evening) flight to Ft. L. We found a restaurant close to our hotel, celebrated our successful trip, said our good-byes and headed for bed. I had the first flight out, at 6:30am, which got me back to Portland at 12:10pm and on to lunch with Janet and friends near The Dalles. One week later, I'm completely back into our life here in The Dalles, looking forward to our upcoming January trip, and then another LWI trip to Cap Haitien in October, 2010.

As always, I thank my 6 teammates for their friendship and support on this trip, I thank Rick, Gelin, Cedodo and Telin (cook and house keeper extraordinaire) for their loving support and fellowship, and I thank all of you who prayed for us while we were traveling and working in Haiti. 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**