

HAITI 2010 EARTHQUAKE MEDICAL RELIEF
END OF MISSION REPORT
February 5, 2010

When I initially decided to go to Haiti to assist in the earthquake relief mission this Scripture came to my mind: 2 Corinthians 4:5: *For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as LORD, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.*" This portion of Scripture is clearly a warning against self-promotion and a call to proclaim Christ as LORD and myself as His servant. We all know the great tendency we have for self-promotion, even during times of tragedy. So I went with the desire to work on a team and a willingness to do whatever. That meant I did not go with an additional personal agenda that would have hampered the relief effort. I will relate how that applied to me personally. Right now I want to report on the condition of the people after this great tragedy. With out his direct permission (but I believe that he would not mind) I am going to quote the report sent to me from Ray Smith, PhD, Professor of Business from the Chattanooga, TN area via his wife Cathie. It was my assessment of the situation as well.

- ❖ I just talked with Ray and he is getting along fine in Port. He said he has seen a lot of things in Haiti, but everywhere he goes this time causes him to be totally amazed by 2 things: 1) the atrocious and extreme conditions of the makeshift tent city housing and 2) the equally amazing (on the opposite end of the spectrum) resilience of the people living in the cities. No one is working; no one is going to school; no one has anything to do and not much to eat. But at the same time it is as if life is re-emerging out of the rubble as if it never missed a beat. He walked through several tent cities today and saw much of the same people-to-people exchanges that you would see on any rural hillside out in the country. People were talking, some laughing, fixing each other's hair, washing clothes in basins with water drawn from who-knows-where, cooking on small chaudiers... (Heavy metal/aluminum pot used to cook food over a charcoal fire.)

When our team landed in Port-au-Prince after flying in on a corporate jet with leather seats and a large bathroom we headed for King's Hospital. By the way I need to explain the corporate jet thing. The owner of Priority Air headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio donated 12 hours of flight time to the relief effort in Haiti at a cost of \$10,000 per hour. Our team got the benefit of two of those hours. When we arrived at King's Hospital we soon realized that we were not needed there—there already was a medical team in place. So there was a scramble to find our where we should be. We spent several hours at the UN headquarters waiting on word about where we could serve. We got a little information. After returning to the home of Dr. Hubert Morquette (who hosted us) for a delicious meal, things began to fall in place. Whether it was that evening or the next day I don't remember, but we received a call from the ACC (Apostolic Christian Church) team leader, Dr. Keith Knepp, that there was a need for four persons at the Hospital of Light. I immediately wanted to go, but I also knew that Dr. Fred Brown (former missionary surgeon to the Hospital of Light), his daughter Delena RN and son Daniel wanted to go as well as orthopedic surgeon Evan Ekman. They wanted Mrs. Helene Pearson, RN and former director of nursing at the hospital, to go as well. That was 5 people, so I knew I could not go. I resigned myself to staying in Port-au-Prince and doing whatever was needed. When they were about ready to jump in the van they wondered why I was not going. I explained the situation and they immediately stated that you, Steve, need to go. So we headed back to Dr. Morquette's home and I picked up my luggage and off we went. It was a smooth trip except for having to avoid fissures in the road from the earthquake.

When we arrived at the Hospital of Light situated in the small village of Bonne Fin, everyone was eager to start to work. That evening we met with ACC medical team and we were each given an assignment. Let me state this—it took a team effort to do what we had to do to save people's lives and limbs. It was amazing how we all blended together, even with a diva and divos (I made up this word) on the team. It was good to see three extremely brilliant and self-confident orthopedic doctors work together for the common good of the traumatically injured patients.

Anyway I was given the assignment of being the translator for the anesthesiologist and nurse anesthetists in the OR as they worked with two Haitian nurse anesthetists. (I knew that I was going to have to revive the critical care nursing that I had not done in 28 years and do something that I was not comfortable doing. Being a public health nurse specializing in STD's was not needed at this time.) It started that way, but I soon found myself working in the pre-op and post-op area. I worked in this area from Monday, January 25th to Monday, February 1st. We all worked at least 12 hours a day and most of the time late in to the night. It was quite a task to distinguish who just had surgery and who was recovering from surgery. I was privileged to work with an extremely talented anesthesiologist Dr. Bill, who was also board-certified in emergency medicine. We all used our first names on our medical tape name tags. I was known as Fre (brother) Steve, RN/Inf. He provided all the needed pre-op anesthesia prep as well as post-op pain control. Dr. Bill started a lot of IV's for which I had long lost the talent. The last IV I had started was probably back in early 1983 when I used to use scalp veins to start IV's in infants and young children.

It was that first day or second day that I encountered Marie Rose Courtois in the pre-op area. I had heard that a woman had to self-amputate her arm in order to save herself. While she was laying on the gurney I asked her directly if she was the one that had cut her own arm off. She calmly answered that she was the one. She told me that she had a decision to make while she lay trapped under the rubble—it was either her arm or her life; and she choice to live. This brings me to tell her story. Her story is not necessarily unique, because there were probably others who had to do the same thing. An evening or two later I sat by her bed in the post-op ward and interviewed her. This is her story. It may have some graphic descriptions.

The Story of Marie Rose Courtois
January 12, 2010

Marie Rose was born in 1963 in the city of Cotes de Fer on the southeast coast of Haiti. She went to the National or Public school in that city. At the age of 23 she moved to Port-au-Prince Haiti and lived in the Carrefour Feuille district of the capital city. In 1990 she moved to the western suburb part of Port-au-Prince called Carrefour, which was near the epi-center. She had three children, two boys and one girl named Nadege, who was helping with care of her mother.

On Tuesday, January 12th, about the time of the earthquake, she was cleaning herself up after the work day at a T-Shirt-making factory. When she felt the earthquake she thought that this was going to be the end of her life. She grabbed a concrete pillar with her left arm in order to support herself. Then the next thing she knew, she was lying on her stomach with her left arm pinned under the concrete pillar. She was lying under the rubble of what was once a three story building. Once she realized that she was trapped under the pillar she made the decision to separate her trapped, mangled left arm from her body with her bare right hand. She did not use any sharp objects to do this. I asked if it was painful. She said yes and that she would work on tearing the muscles and vessels apart and when the pain became unbearable, she would lay her head down to compose herself before she would start again. Finally after working until about 3:00 AM on Wednesday, January 13th she finally broke free from her mangled arm. She stated that when she was finally freed from the last shred of tissue, she fell backwards. When she got up she felt around on the floor and found her cell phone. She opened it up and it provided the light for her to crawl to freedom. She said that she had to crawl over broken glass and sharp metal objects. Finally she came to an opening in the rubble and crawled out to the top of the rubble and immediately fainted. She thought to herself that she had freed herself only to die in this place. She revived after some time and then began yelling for help. A man came from the street and pulled her away from the rubble and she laid on the edge of the street until 7:00 AM. The bystanders had roughly bandaged the severed limb and called her family to come and pick her up.

At 7:00 AM her family came and picked her up and took her to the Adventist hospital where they bandaged the wound. There was no room for her to stay there so after staying 2 days outside of her destroyed home, she and her family made their way to a hospital in Fond des Blancs, which was not too far from her childhood home. They dressed the wound there as well. She then made her way to the General Hospital of Les Cayes on Friday afternoon, January 15th. By that time the left arm was infected. On Saturday, the 16th, she made her way up the mountain to the Hospital of Light. She probably received initial care from Dr. Robert Belding of Columbia, SC. During the time that I was at Bonne Fin, she was operated on by Dr. Evan Ekman (of Columbia, SC, who also has family connections in Gastonia, NC), who traveled in with the Lumiere Medical Ministries team.

I asked her if she was a believer, that is, had she made her peace with God through Jesus Christ. She said yes and told me that she was a member of the Faith Apostolic Church near her home. I then turned my questions to her daughter Nadege. Her daughter related how on the day of the earthquake, she was out buying supplies for a party for her and her co-workers. She plainly stated that if she had not been out shopping she would have died with her co-workers during the earthquake. Her place of employment was also destroyed.

I asked her what she will do when she is released from the hospital. She stated that she will return to Cotes de Fer and stay with her mother. The thing that amazed me about her was her attitude. She was smiling and content. There was no bitterness evident in her countenance.

Photos of this remarkable lady can be seen on the Brown Family web site.

Many thanks to all of you who have been in prayer for this team. It is time to praise the Lord for all He has done. If you have not been to the Brown family blog and read the details of the trip, please do so. God has and is doing many miracles among the Haitian people. There is hope, as they call on His name.

The blog site:

- 1) www.lumiereministries.com
- 2) click on: Lumiere in the media-middle blue button
- 3) click on: Brown family blog
- 4) Password: Brownfamily

Our love to all...we will be in touch.

Steve & Debbie
February 5, 2010