

## **Fair Weather Travels**

### **1. Back in Haiti after 8 Month Absence**

Good for travel with no storms, flooding or other road hazards, or so we thought. Crossing the mountain ranges in the western part of the country, the weather patterns are different and again we came across a rockslide in the higher elevations that gave us a needed break in our travels until local maintenance crew cleared the road. So we had time to act like tourists.



The weather report for the week that we served in Dame-Marie – hot, hot, and hot.



Land slide on road to Dame-Marie



Left to right – Jean O'Neill RN, Dr. Rolph Richeme, Dr. Reinaldo Figueroa, Phoebe Parker RN, Bridget Daly RN, Megan Gonzalez BSN, Kathy Aries RN, Amber Neal RN, Dr. Valerie Barthelemy, Dr. Liz Morgan, Dr. Michael Bourque, Ian Tenney, Brenda Tenney, Dr. Tom Gorin (Missing – Dr. Esther Antoine, Anne D'Orvilliers)

## **2. Reality of Haiti and Revised Travel Plan**

Our two prior trips, scheduled for last September 2015 and February 2016, had been cancelled due to the unrest over the failed presidential elections. We had two full teams of superb medical staff committed to serve, with all plans made, and families prepared and monies committed, but unfortunately plans had to be cancelled several days before departure for safety reasons. So during this trip we were a little on edge as we made our way across Haiti to our destination of Dame-Marie on the westernmost seacoast. Aside from the natural road conditions, the ride was, fortunately, uneventful.

### **Arrival in Dame Marie**

#### **1. New Donated Equipment**

When our bus finally arrived in Dame-Marie after the ten-hour marathon ride, we were greeted out front at the hospital by the sight of our newest equipment donation. A workhorse anesthesia machine that can be used by any trained anesthesia members arriving from almost any country.



Delivery of anesthesia machine



Anesthesia Machine

Now just a few required additional parts and it can be used to safely complete surgeries in the operating room at Dame-Marie for years to come. We give thanks to two of our supporting donors, Lis Shlansky MD and Victor Dowling Esq., who made this possible. What an extraordinary lifesaving gift to our team and the people we serve.

#### **2. OB/GYN Ultrasound Department Established**

One of the first priorities on this trip was to set up the OB/GYN ultrasound area using the supplies and equipment donated by Dr. Marco Morel, which had arrived after an arduous trip by container ship. The ultrasound unit and electric procedure table were put to good use by our two Maternal Fetal Medicine staff serving on this trip – Dr. Reinaldo Figueroa and Dr. Liz Morgan.



Left to right – Dr. Reinaldo Figueroa and Dr. Liz Morgan performing ultrasonic scan of patient

### **Family Style Living and Eating**

#### **1. The Kitchen and our Common Meals**

We work long hours, but we enjoy our down time when we are back in our little home in the middle of Main Street, Dame-Marie. Our six Haitian cooks toil all day to give us a really scrumptious meal at daybreak and sunset, as well as a box lunch; and all from an open charcoal fire at the back of the house. It is truly an amazing fare in the middle of one of the poorest and most remote spots in Haiti.



Charcoal Stove



Common Meal



**From Surgical Miracles to Gifts from the Heart**

**1. The OR and Staff at Work**

We were blessed to have the presence of three amazing Haitian professionals that served alongside us on this trip – Dr. Rolph Richeme, Trauma Surgeon, and Drs. Esther Antoine and Valerie Barthelemy, Anesthesiologists. They are helping us with our ultimate goal of **helping Haitians heal Haitians** and of recruiting Haitian medical staff that will one day stay in Dame-Marie and keep the operating and Caesarean Section rooms open when we are not there. We learn from each other despite the number of different languages – English, French, Creole, and Spanish – being spoken. I am humbled when I serve as first assistant to Dr. Richeme for the week and watch his amazing skills doing all kinds of surgery flawlessly. Thank you, my friends, for your service to your people.



Left to right – Dr. Reinaldo Figueroa, Dr. Valerie Barthélemy, and Dr. Richeme posting the day's OR schedule



Left to right – Dr. Esther Antoine and Dr. Rolph Richeme discuss the next day's surgeries



Left to right – Dr. Rolph Richeme and Dr. Michael R. Bourque



Left to right – Jean O'Neil RN, Dr. Rolph Richeme and Dr. Michael R. Bourque

## 2. From the Heart

Sometimes it is those random acts of kindness that your teammates perform that really take your breath away. Brenda and Ian Tenney were running our pre-op area. I heard that Ian was inspired to sketch some of the waiting family members and young patients. It is these acts that the Dame-Marie villagers will remember long after we have departed. What a gift I have been given to work alongside these extraordinary missionaries.



Ian Tenney with Dame-Marie patients and his artwork

### **A New Family Begins**

Every trip there seems to be another story of a mother on the edge of survival for her and her unborn. This trip it was a young woman who had been in labor for three days and had not progressed past the middle phases of her labor. She was exhausted and we were asked to possibly help with a Cesarean Section. However, working with the young Haitian resident on duty at the hospital, we felt there were a number of things that still could be done to help this woman have a successful birth. So a number of hours later, the cry of a newborn baby echoed



through the halls. Everyone had a smile for each of the Haitian and American helping hands that had worked together to accomplish this blessed event -- result that shows how much our presence can mean to these good people living in Dame-Marie.



Megan Gonzalez RN with Dr. Tom Gorin  
examining newborn



New mother, newborn, father, grandmother  
and aunt

### **A Photo Tribute to our American Missionaries of May 2016**



Left to right – Kneeling – Kathy Aries, Dr. Michael R. Bourque; Standing Phoebe Packer RN, Dr. Tom Gorin, Jean O'Neill RN, Megan Gonzalez RN, Bridget Daly RN, Ian Tenney, Brenda Tenney, Amber Neal RN, Dr. Reinaldo Figueroa, Dr. Liz Morgan, Anne D'Orvilliers

Our Haitian team members had already departed from Port-au-Prince to their homes when we gathered for our trip home to the U.S.

### **And Now Truly Exciting News**

#### **1. Our Second Operating Room**

If there was a silver lining to our two cancelled trips to Dame-Marie, it was that the local and distant communities, who had been aware of our work for the last four years, realized what everyone stood to lose if our efforts were washed away like the storms that frequent this part of Haiti. Our surgical teams are gems without equal. We do thousands and thousands of dollars of surgery each trip, in addition to the medical and pharmacy care, and all for nothing but the smiles we earn in return for serving those living without any of the benefits we take for granted in the US. So it was an amazing surprise when Monsieur Pierre Antoine, our Dame-Marie benefactor and hospital administrator, showed me the second OR that his community had chipped in resources to create. We hope to have this finished by September. It will take much longer to furnish it.



Second Operating Room under construction



New Emergency Room

#### **2. Our New Emergency Room**

Even more surprising was the appearance of a half-built ER that suddenly has taken shape on a new West Wing of our small hospital. Pierre Antoine told me that he found the necessary connections and the World Health Organization (WHO) is now building this incredible structure with their own monies and people. All this progress since last September when Pierre had composed a simple sketch of a two room ER that he hoped to build someday. And now it is half built -- truly a miracle.

**Closing Thoughts**

To all of our veterans, who have spent the last four years in Dame-Marie in sweat, hardship and hope, as well as to our newest mission goers, I say that if you continue to come and serve, our newest dreams are that that we will have not only a regional medical center run by Haitian personnel, but also a multinational mission training center. That is my ultimate goal, and a promise to be fulfilled to that young woman who lost her life now ten years ago in the Dominican Republic. And from her tragedy, her personal sacrifice and her son growing up motherless, all that we have accomplished together has flowed from that moment. Please continue to dream and to serve alongside me.

Thank you also to each of our supporters, Haitian and American, who have worked on the front lines, behind the front lines and from all parts of the Northeast to support these dreams. It is exceedingly rare that one gets the chance to impact a single community, never mind a whole region of a country. It is a gift and an obligation. And like all of those steps we have taken to get to this moment, we will and must continue to do this work correctly, at the highest level, and with no thought for personal gain.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our early missionaries who for different reasons are no longer able to serve. Let it be known that we are standing on the shoulders of what you accomplished early on, when we would have laughed at what we would have become as an organization and as teammates today. I was there with you all, and in my heart you are still with me as I walk the roads of Dame-Marie. We will someday *all* be nameless, but our efforts will live on in the hearts and hands of those who follow, serving those who are in desperate need.

God Bless,

*Michael R. Bourque MD*

Medical Director for MATH Dame-Marie, formerly Saint Francis IMM



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