

Adventures on the Road...Again

New signage in the airport indicated more progress was being made in modernizing key areas of Haiti. Even so, our November team of Haitian and American personnel were on alert after the violence that had racked the country in July. High gasoline prices without any visible return in aid to their communities was the source of the people's anger.



When we came upon an impressive backlog of huge trucks and people at the entryway to the only bridge into Jérémie, we feared the worst. Fortunately, the bridge was only being repaired, not damaged, and there were security personnel at the entry, so we felt much more comfortable finding ourselves among the many Haitians similarly affected.



Plenty of time to do repairs as this truck was going nowhere today

Only motorcycle and foot traffic were being allowed to cross the bridge, so everyone had to unload larger vehicles and walk across. One truck was filled with bottles of Coca Cola and the driver worked up quite a thirst unloading the trailer and using a wheelbarrow to make multiple trips across the bridge – I had to smile, remembering the commercial years ago, that *Things Go Better with Coke!*



Our veteran team members took this diversion in stride and followed suit — got off our bus, unloaded the top of the bus and made our way across to the other side of the bridge with 20 50 lbs. bags of surgical supplies, our backpacks and personal bags. Smiles were everywhere when our replacement bus arrived to take us the rest of the way to Dame-Marie.



L-R: Ken Messier, Lisa Pepin RN, our bus driver assistant and Dr. Joseph Glavylove



L-R: Dan Branco RN, Lisa Pepin RN, Margo Coffey PA and Lynn Nochisaki APRN



L-R: Dan Branco RN, Mike Brunell PA, Lynn Nochisaki APRN and Kathy Aries RN

Under the bridge, life was taking a slower, calmer turn with fishing off a bamboo pier. And in the towns we passed through to Dame-Marie, people were peaceful and busy with their daily lives.



Along the way, I once again added photos of wrecked vehicles to my collection. This accident caused by the extreme road conditions, car maintenance issues or a momentary lapse in attention.



I was also looking forward to stopping at Les Petites Abeilles, a school / convent, where an elderly Sister had given us sanctuary back in May. In protest of the government's lack of road maintenance, local villagers had hacked the road so that no one could pass. It was a blessing our benefactor, Pierre Antoine, guided us to this place of safety to wait for another bus to pick us up on the other side. This trip, I was

hoping to make a donation and give a gift of some early French religious books that Anne D'Orvilliers had found from her Dad's belongings. Unfortunately, we found that the school / convent that had run for 90 years had just closed for lack of funds, and the Sister had been recalled to Port-au-Prince. Another sign of the harsh economic environment.



Photos of the church and our place of safety with the nun saying goodbye (right) from the May mission trip

Service Begins in Dame-Marie

Once in Dame-Marie, and after the traditional pumpkin soup welcome lunch prepared by the mission house cooks, little time was wasted in getting to the hospital. Even though some of the key areas now have air conditioning, most do not, and oscillating fans from the mission house were brought to help move the humid air so it is tolerable for both patients and staff.

The surgeons started the triage process for the patients already waiting, while the majority of the team unpacked and set up each designated area that would be used during the week of surgery. Every missionary is a workhorse, no exceptions, and this trip I was tasked to get the staff bathroom up to code.



Our hospital away from home



Patients patiently waiting



L-R: Dan Branco RN, Ken Messier, Kathy Messier RPh and Ketia Azor RN setting up Post-Op and Pharmacy



Dr. Michael Bourque, janitor-in-training

On Monday, we were greeted by thankful patients or their families who spoke for them. The happy little boy in the left photograph is now six months old and named “Jim” after our general helper on the May mission team. His mother came to thank us once again for the safe Cesarean section birth of her healthy and happy son.

While the child, in the right photograph, owes her life to the team that oversaw and helped fund her transfer to a regional pediatric hospital for correction of severe anemia after a traumatic delivery. The price of this miracle, \$50 US, for transportation and donor blood. Lynn Nochisaki APRN had put the IV in six years ago and was fortunate to be here this trip to see the results of her skilled hands. Do not be put off by the lack of smiles, though. Most Haitian people regard photos as a serious event and do not smile in their formal pictures. The thankful smiles of grandmother and patient happened off camera.



L-R: Lisa Pepin RN and Emily Burke RN with Jim and mother



Lynn Nochisaki APRN with child and grandmother

An Expanded Role of Teaching

More and more, our efforts are directed at enabling our Haitian colleagues and staff to run the mission tasks rather than watching us. This trip OR #1 was staffed by an all-Haitian team. This is our dream come true and reflects the core philosophy of MATH – *Helping Haitians Heal Haitians*.

This mission also extends to student nurses (in white) from the Universite Institut Medical Hippocrate in Jérémie rotating through and being taught the basics of scrubbing and gowning, becoming comfortable working in an OR environment and learning the necessary steps of running pre-op and post-op areas and helping to dispense medications.



Maggie Levasseur RN reviewing Pre-Op protocol with student nurse



Kathy Aries RN outfitting and guiding student nurses for observing in the OR



And now we are accomplishing nonmedical training in better health and hygiene practices. This trip we were blessed to have the services of veteran Lynn Nochisaki, Pediatric APRN. Her women’s club from the

South Windsor (CT) Community made cloth, washable sanitary pads for these young women, who have no sanitary materials. Many of whom miss school when they have their monthly menses. This informative talk to a group of young teen girls from a local school was wildly received and they asked lots of questions.



Pharmacy and Reading Glasses Clinic

Dr. Tellus Nickeson Cazeau, Michael Brunell PAFP and Lynn Nochisaki APRN saw hundreds of patients who had primary care needs. Kathy Messier RPh, Ketí Azor RN and student nurses filled a staggering number of prescriptions each day, resulting in a deluge of medications dispensed and our stock severely depleted. While in another part of the hospital, Anne D'Orvilliers held a clinic to provide reading glasses to ~100 villagers. We saw an immediate outcome that evening on the way back to the mission house when a villager wearing his glasses was performing a task.



Veteran, Kathy Messier RPh



L-R: Anne D'Orvilliers with patient and interpreter William Burke



Reading glasses recipient

The Room Where Miracles Occur

Our main task on these trips to Dame-Marie continues to be relieving the surgical burdens caused by living and working in such a harsh environment. Although a beautiful tropical setting, the area is rampant with disease, malnutrition and poverty, and living there is physically demanding. One surgical problem, hernias, occur in a high percentage of both adults and children. Surgical correction can return people of all ages to pain-free existence for the first time in years almost instantaneously. But the numbers of patients who are waiting for this help is staggering, and the hernias encountered here in Dame-Marie are usually advanced and complicated to remedy.

However, it is absolutely heartwarming to see the trust that the people of Dame-Marie show when they enter our OR suites and find the camaraderie of our OR team members. From our work over the last six

plus years, the patients know and expect that they will awake with the quality of their lives and health immeasurably improved. On entry to the OR, however, our smiles are put aside and there is only focus and sustained concentration on the task at hand—a safe surgery and a good outcome.



L-R: Dr. Patrick Charlin, young patient, Dr. Djovensky Mathurin and Emily Burke RN



L-R: Dr. Benouchea Pierre, Lisa Pepin RN, Margo Coffey PA



L-R: Dr. Esther Antoine-Dardignac comforting young patient before administering anesthesia



L-R: OR #1 – Fabiola Mathurin RN, Tabuteau Marie Thatcher RN, Drs. Djovensky Mathurin, Patrick Charolin and Betty Succes

I would like to take a moment to thank a few donors of recent equipment that has contributed to the capability and safety of the services we can provide.

- Dr. Valerie Rossetti, anesthesiologist and veteran team member, for the oxygen concentrator, which makes oxygen out of room air. (This little black box insures a secondary source to the big and heavy O₂ tanks. What a safety advance!)
- Dr. Jose Arias-Camison, and Dr. Indira Panthagani, two of our esteemed neonatologists at Trinity Health of New England - Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, for anesthesiology equipment upgrades.
- Congregational Church of South Glastonbury for a replacement ultrasound probe.



Oxygen concentrator



Anesthesia machine – L-R: Ashish Dhammam, Soma Technology Toby McPherson-Belanger CRNA and Dr. Valerie Rossetti



Ultrasound probe – Dr. Joseph Glavylove and patient

Not All Happy Events (Some Stark Realities)

The small house attached to our mission house for the last six plus years was bustling with a young family with many children. We had watched the youngest, a baby when we arrived in Dame-Marie the first time, become a schoolchild. The house this time, however, was quiet, empty and closed. When I inquired of our benefactor, Pierre Antoine, he told me the mother had died of uterine cancer and the family was now split up among multiple relatives in multiple locations. The mother is what holds the family together in Haiti. When she is lost and with the lack of food and resources, placement of children together is difficult, if not impossible.



September 2016



November 2018

I will see this silent house on every future trip to Dame-Marie and this will reinforce my motivation to try and do what we can, not just for better health, but for a better standard of living.

A newborn child with hydrocephalus (swelling on the brain) was brought to us. The child's only hope for survival was placement of a shunt by a neurosurgeon to relieve the pressure. Our presence and pooled resources of contacts and funding allowed us to send this child and her parents to the proper medical facility in Port-au-Prince with the hope she would survive.



Mother, father and child with hydrocephalus with Dr. Tellus Cazeau (in green)

Evacuation!

If you haven't guessed already, this work can be very physically and emotionally wearing on the angel-hearted heroes that make up our mission teams. Ken Messier, one of our most veteran travelers, threw his back out bending over hundreds of patients taking information, blood pressures, etc. on this trip. It

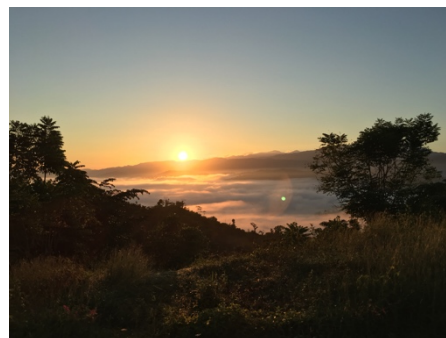
was obvious that the degree of incapacity would make the 13-hour bus ride back over the very rough roads to Port-au-Prince impossible, so arrangements were made for a medical evacuation. On the morning of our Friday departure back to Port-au-Prince, a rescue helicopter arrived on the soccer field in Dame-Marie. The pilot and one of the flight medics were from Montana, one a volunteer for two weeks and the other employed by the Aiyti Air Ambulans. The view from the air was incredible and once again reinforced the origin of the word Haiti – “Mountains beyond Mountains”.



And while Ken and I traveled in the helicopter, the rest of the team had to endure the brutal bus ride, leaving in darkness to avoid any potential unrest in the streets of the villages along the way. But they also were above the clouds and able to enjoy a beautiful sunrise over the mountains without having the \$26,000 helicopter charge minus 20% for non-profits discount on their credit card! I said a quick prayer that our travel insurance would come through.



05:00 am bus departure from Dame-Marie



Beautiful sunrise and mountain view

The Return

It is always difficult to get a photograph with a complete team of Haitian and US team members during the busy week or at the end of the mission with some members still back at the hospital in Dame-Marie and others ready to be home with family after a week of service and the 13 hour bus ride!



L-R: Maggie Levasseur RN, Lynn Nochisaki APRN, Emily Burke RN, Lisa Pepin RN, Anne D'Orvilliers, Margo Coffey PA, Kathy Messier RPh, Michael Brunell PA, Dr. Michael Bourque, Dan Branco RN, Dr. Esther Antoine-Dardignac, Kathy Aries RN, Marie France St. Louis RN, Dr. Betty Succes, Dr. Benoucheca Pierre, Marie France St. Louis RN, Ketia Azor RN, Tabuteau Marie Thatcher RN and Dr. Joseph Glavylove – Missing from photo Dr. Djovensky Mathurin, Dr. Patrick Charolin, Dr. Tellus Nickeson Cazeau and Fabiola Mathurin RN

For the US team, we stay at Wall's Guest House for our night of rest and relaxation before departure and a team photo – a testimony to the amazing folks on the front line of MATH.



L-R: Standing – Margo Coffey PA, Maggie Levasseur RN, Emily Burke RN, Lisa Pepin RN, Lynn Nochisaki APRN, Michael Brunell PA, Kathy Messier RPh, Dan Branco RN and Kathy Aries RN; Sitting – Ken Messier, Dr. Michael Bourque and Anne D'Orvilliers

And I want to give special notice to my good friends, Ken and Kathy Messier. They are original missionaries from our beginnings in the Dominican Republic when we were learning, and now contributing our hard-won expertise in Dame-Marie. My association with Ken actually goes all the way back to Boy Scouts. Who could have imagined those simple service projects we did together would some fifty-five years later morph into these incredible adventures?



L-R: Ken and Kathy Messier

Ken has let me know that this will be his last service in Dame-Marie. Age and health changes have contributed to a change in plans for my good friend. However, like the true selfless hero he is, he has already volunteered for the other MATH project in Port-au-Prince, where travel is at a minimum and conditions are not quite as trying. (Sorry if I am embarrassing you, Ken, but you are an incredible person. I am lucky to call you friend.)

Our Future Hopes

All of the MATH mission team members are getting a bit long in the tooth. The training of the local Haitian staff has become an important way to sustain the future health needs of Dame-Marie, and we are constantly on the lookout for younger medical personnel with that special heart and head to take up our mantle.

Recently two bright young people have indicated a willingness to help.



James Luc RN / CRNA



Kathleen O'Hara

James Luc RN soon to be CRNA – He is native to Dame-Marie and was an outstanding nurse in whom several of our anesthesia personnel saw potential and have paid his way through anesthesia school. We hope to have him on board for our February 2019 mission team. Thank you, Dr. Clark O'Brien, Candace Goodwin CRNA and Rafael Torres CRNA for your special contribution to James's future.

Kathleen O'Hara – Presently a medical student at The University of Vermont (UVM), she has done tours with both Port-au-Prince and Dame-Marie teams. We are supporting her application for a summer elective through the UVM Global Health Program. If her application is successful, she might find herself in Russia, Africa, Vietnam or the Dominican Republic.

Gratitude

It is just a day away from New Year's Eve as I compose these thoughts, and a fitting time to look back on those special unsung heroes here at home that have made what you have seen and read possible.

Bouvier Family / Bouvier Insurance

The Bouvier Family was the first corporate sponsor directed at the Dame-Marie Project and dedicating their donation to a cause dearest to my heart. Because of their goodness, we now have a functioning in-house anesthesia and obstetrical service that can perform Cesarean sections whenever needed. This is so necessary to prevent the needless loss of life of mother and baby that occurs every minute of every day in the impoverished world. With their support, images like this are now everyday occurrences in Dame-Marie.



Joyce Lagnese and Family

Joyce Lagnese and her family are our second family donor, who have contributed to the ongoing costs of maintaining Haitian professional staff at Dame-Marie. When we first arrived 6 years ago, the prenatal service was anemic and many of the uneducated and truly poor in the mountains were afraid of the hospital with the feeling that hospitals are where you go to die. However, I am now overjoyed that with the continued support of MATH and our special donors, the prenatal visits for 2018 now total in the thousands. We are gaining the trust of the people – the poorest of the poor – we are meant to serve.

This year the Lagnese family also answered my prayer for a larger generator. To truly advance the Hôpital de la Communaute Dame-Marienne to the next level of service, more reliable electricity is needed to add services like Radiology, Mammography and improved laboratory services.



Maternity Clinic



New generator (Left)

St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center

Finally, I have to thank Dr. John F. Rodis, MD, MBA, FACHE, President of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center (SFHMC), and the entire Saint Francis Family for their contributions of materials, expertise, supplies and pharmaceuticals over these last 12 years. Dr. Rodis saw firsthand in serving with us the tremendous need and continues to respond by his support of our efforts. And now with SFHMC being the flagship of Trinity Health Of New England, Dr. Reginald J. Eadie, MD, MBA, President and CEO, has earned my admiration, prayers and eternal thanks for continuing to support this project far from the borders of his responsibility.

The Saint Francis Family have responded to our long-term needs and many of them never see firsthand the miracles they enable through their vital response to our requests trip after trip. But listed below are the departments who have contributed to the success evident in these Mission Stories for all of our missionaries and readers to see firsthand. Absolutely astonishing! THANK YOU.

<i>Administration</i>	<i>Gynecology Ultrasound</i>	<i>Nursing</i>
<i>Anesthesia</i>	<i>Infectious Disease</i>	<i>OB Ultrasound</i>
<i>Central Supply</i>	<i>IT</i>	<i>Operating Room</i>
<i>Dental Services</i>	<i>Maternal Fetal Medicine</i>	<i>Ophthalmology</i>
<i>Emergency Medicine</i>	<i>Media Relations</i>	<i>Pharmacy</i>
<i>Engineering</i>	<i>Medical Dental Staff</i>	<i>Residency Programs</i>
<i>Family Practice</i>	<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Surgery</i>
<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Mission Integration</i>	<i>Women and Children's Services</i>

Our Many Friends, Family Members and Donors

I am always in awe of our everyday supporters, who unasked and unsolicited, just drop off infant clothing, checks, maternity clothes and personal unused medical supplies to me and our other veterans. We still, after all these years of service in Haiti, have no paid US employees outside of our nonprofit accountants. Every miracle and life saved that you see in these stories are a result of everyone's donations and donated professional and nonprofessional services. It is humbling yet awesome to witness. There is still so much good in this world.

In Closing

I would like to paraphrase a few lines of a song I heard over Christmas by Stevie Wonder.

*Someday at a New Year's, we'll see a land
With no hungry children, no empty hand
One happy morning, people will share
A world where people care.*

*Someday all our dreams will come to be
Someday in a world where people are free
Maybe not in time for you and me
But someday at a New Year's time.*

We pray that God will continue to keep our growing programs under his loving hand and keep our supporters here and abroad filled with his spirit of compassion for those in need. Amen.

God Bless you all,

Michael R Bourque MD

Michael Bourque MD
Medical Director for MATH Dame-Marie



www.medicalaidtohaiti.org