

November 2, 2006

Dear Family and Friends,

We have been back in Haiti for three weeks now and it seems like forever! After being home for 1 ½ years, adjusting to living in a remote and rural environment again has had its challenges.

The town of Dessalines has had a few changes since we were here last. There are two morgues in town, a couple of new restaurants, a new hotel, new disco bars, some of the streets have been redone with brick pavers, and there is a new gas station of sorts on the street to the hospital. It's been good to see so many of our old friends and have the opportunity to make new ones.

The mornings start early around here. We awaken each morning around 5 a.m. to snorting pigs, barking dogs and the chatter of people getting their day started. During the evening hours you can hear cheers go up all around town when we get power and during the night you can hear the rhythmic sounds of voodoo drums vying for their place above the radios that are blaring throughout the neighborhood. Even as I type this email this afternoon, there is a voodoo service going on across the street.

Our apartment has become livable and it's beginning to feel like home. Screens have been repaired, walls have been scrubbed, windows have been washed and the kitchen cabinets have been stripped of 5 years of grease. Our mission chauffer and FOHO worker brought us a bed, so we're good to go. The most difficult things we've had to adjust to are not having any power to run a fan at night when the temperature is 87 degrees at 12:30 a.m. and having to take bucket baths all the time. I don't think we will EVER get used to pouring cold water over our hot bodies each evening.

The other night we thought we had a rat in our apartment because the potatoes and avocados had been chewed on. Gregg and one of our workers took our stove outside and checked it but there was no rat inside. That evening, the Munoses and we were outside star gazing.

Gregg happened to go into the house the same time the rat was trying to get out the window Gregg had just fixed. Gregg took the broom and tried to smash the rat and, when he did, it ran under the couch. About the time we came running in to see it, it ran from underneath the couch towards the bedroom where I was standing on the bed. When I saw it run towards the bedroom, I screamed, jumped down off the bed, slammed the door, and caught the rat between the door and the door jamb, killing it. I probably couldn't do that again if I wanted to. And I really don't want to! The rat, including its tail, was probably close to two feet long!

In our last newsletter we told you that President Preval was coming to Dessalines. Well, he came with all the pomp and circumstance (and heavy security!) His car pulled up by the tent, and when he got out, his personal security hovered over him and we never got a glance at him. People lined the streets and several school children in their uniforms were

there to see their president. The program was long and so we left about a third of the way through the ceremony. A little “theater” was being played out in the street commemorating Dessalines and the freedom he helped bring to the slaves.

Two Sundays ago, Dr. Savain, our medical director, and Jeanne Munos preached at the Dessalines Free Methodist Church. Dr. Savain addressed medical issues of the “physical” kind and Jeanne brought it all together by addressing the “spiritual” issues and how not being right spiritually can also bring about physical problems. It was well received. Dr. Savain was so proud of himself because this was the first time he actually “preached.”

Castel’s hip seems to be totally healed. He feels great, looks great and walks everywhere he goes. While he was in the hospital for his hip surgery he found out he had hypertension and was diabetic. But since he has learned how to eat and care for himself, his blood sugar and his blood pressure have returned to normal. With the information he learned in the United States on how to care for himself as a diabetic, he returned home and started the “Diabetic Association of Dessalines” where, once a month, he holds a seminar instructing about 25 diabetics on how and what they should eat and the importance of checking their blood sugar regularly. Little did we know that God would use this experience in Castel’s life to touch the lives of others here in Dessalines. Diabetes and hypertension are two major health issues among the Haitian people. We hope to see this clinic expand and have the resources to sustain it.

We learned that Castel’s healing was quite a testimony to this community. As you may or may not know, the Dessalines Hospital has had financial difficulties, resulting in the laying off of several staff.

As a result of this action, voodoo curses had been placed on Castel’s life and people were looking at his deteriorating hip and health as the fulfillment of these curses. However, God intervened and brought healing to Castel and the witness of God’s healing power to this community was a powerful one. Hallelujah!

Two weeks ago Gregg got a call from the mission in Port-au-Prince telling him that our conference office had been broken into. We are thankful that they didn’t have time to break into the church again.

The police were called and the thieves took off before they could take too much. It looks like they rummaged through desks and took money that might have been in the drawers.

Emailing is still a problem for us. Gregg has been working on trying to get email at the apartment where we are living but he keeps running into snags. We’re still using the hospital computer to correspond with all of you but people are usually stacked up waiting to use it.

Yesterday we downloaded an email to our flash drive and brought a virus home with us! So, we appreciate your patience with our inability to correspond with you on a timely basis.

This should catch you up-to-date with us. We love hearing from you and we look forward to the day when so many of you can return to Haiti and use the gifts and talents God has blessed you with to bless these beautiful people.

Our love to you all!
Gregg and Gail