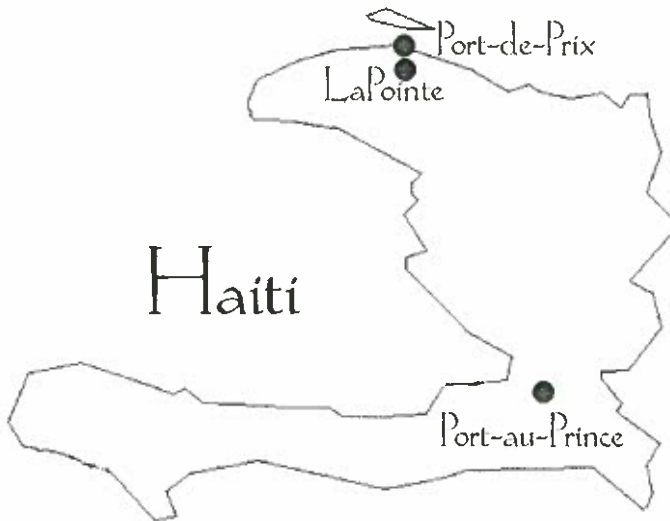


Excerpts from a

Medical Missionary Journey



to Haiti



Gloria J. Lie
1996

Haiti 1996



But the fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, faithfulness,
gentleness and self-control
Galatians 5:22

Wydance Inc.

Introduction

As medical missionaries with World Medical Mission, we can serve wherever they have a hospital.

In December of 1995, we made plans to visit my mother, Gertrude Klemm, in Florida from January 13 to January 21, 1996.

During the Christmas holiday, Dr. Paul Echhoff, a medical missionary to Haiti, called and expressed the need for a medical surgeon. He was home on furlough from Haiti. We were familiar with the mission, because of our acquaintance Lois Beadle from our area that is a single missionary in Haiti. We told Paul we would pray about it, if this is the Lord's will for us. Everything has to be in His timing. We already had tickets to Florida, "Lord, do you want us to go on to Haiti from Mom's?" We also asked our pastor to pray, as to what the Lord wants for us.

We had New Years and it was back to work on Tuesday. We put a fleece out for the Lord. I called the World Medical Mission board and told them we had been praying about going to Haiti. If the Lord wants us to go now, He will have to bring all the plans together by tomorrow Wednesday. This would mean being gone three weeks, not just one week. We made phone calls and continued to pray. By noon on Wednesday, we had our plans for Haiti complete.

The Lord wants us to go now. "Here am I, Lord, send me".

Sunday — January 21, 1996

Up at 5:30am, breakfast done and finishing packing one suitcase each (limit of 25 pounds), we left for the airport at 6:45am. Said our good-byes to Mom and Gerhert (from Germany), first stop was Miami. We left Orlando at 9am due into Miami at 10:30am with our flight from Miami leaving at 11:45am arriving Port-au-Prince 1:45pm. The temp. was 85°. The culture shock is the same as in Africa, including the Ivory Coast. Very crowded, the river is dirty, full of debris and dirt and is used for everything.

The President is building a voodoo temple in the center of town. We found out he has a voodoo curse out on Clinton. The native tongue is Creole, the national tongue is French. The native busses are very decorative and covered every inch.

We were met by Duane and Beth Brown, missionaries from Indiana.

The market place is like the Ivory Coast, all over the road. The mission compound in Port-au-Prince houses several families, plus a school and seminary.

Dinner was with Roger and Nancy See, they are from Romeo also and have been in Haiti since 1972. His family were missionaries here in Haiti and he grew up here. We had to be home by 8:55pm to find our way, because the electricity is turned off at 9pm.

We have two kerosene lamps, one for the bedroom and one for the kitchen table, that I am using right now.

The Haitian people are very boisterous. We have our family gatherings and parties inside our house, they have theirs outside and in front of their houses. Port-au-Prince, the capital city, is in the valley between two beautiful mountain ranges. The mission compound is on the hillside overlooking the river. The scenery is beautiful at night. Electricity is only on between the hours of 2am - 6am and 8am - 2pm.

P.S.

Today I received the most wonderful compliment in my whole life. At the airline desk, the clerk asked us why we were going to Haiti. I told him we were Medical Missionaries. He asked if we were Christian Missionaries, and I replied that we were. He said, "I could tell it by your faces."

Monday – January 22

Sleeping was different last night. There must be hundreds of dogs around to keep you awake. Up at 5:15am, get the luggage ready, wash and get dressed. We still had lights and right in the middle of writing the lights went out and we had to use the oil lamps. 6:15am breakfast with the Browns.

We are all to ride the school van, drop the students off, then the drive will take us to the airport. There is a Christian Academy in Port-au-Prince. The missionary children attend there and the elite Haitian children do too. The school is in English and is only five miles from the compound. It takes thirty minutes to get there because of the many potholes and the way the road winds all around, up and down, it is very rough and hard to travel. Besides all the traffic, the streets are only wide enough for two cars.

There are vendors up and down the street selling all sorts of merchandise. The merchandise is carried by hand, wheel barrow, donkey or whatever means is necessary.

We left Port-au-Prince around 8:30am, with the cost being \$100 American dollars per person for a round trip and \$20 American dollars for being over the weight limit.

We flew in a six seater Cessna plane for forty-five minutes, over the Artaminnie River and the mountains. We flew at the air speed of 200 m.p.h. at about 4500 feet being our altitude above the ground and we finally landed in Port-au-Paix, down the main strip of land. It was on a dirt runway that was also used by people walking and animals used it too. Paul Brown met us and Immanuel, from the hospital campus. Then we had a half hour van ride through town over very rocky, washed out and winding roads.

The hospital complex (campus) is by the ocean. All houses are enclosed by a stone wall in Haiti. The missionary complex houses four single lady missionaries and two families. Lois Beadle greeted us and we were so glad to see each other.

We have our own house, which contains a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms and two baths. All is very clean and the breeze is great.

So many tropical plants and birds are here. This is definitely going to be great. Our lunch and supper meals are with different missionary people.

Today lunch and supper are with Lois and Gail. Gail is in charge of the pediatric department and oversees the hospital.

After lunch we went on the grand tour of the hospital. In the clinic, you could have a consultation and medicine for \$5 United States money, x-rays and lab work are extra. The hospital is very primitive, like fifty years ago, but they are at the same time very complete. The hospital even has a "House of Hope" wing just for children with T.B. and other dangerous diseases.

In Haiti it is the same as in the Ivory Coast of Africa, a family member always goes to the hospital with a patient. This person will cook and care for the patient after surgery, besides the doctor. We also walked down to the ocean, the view is beautiful but the beach is full of garbage; you cannot go swimming.

Supper was delicious. I have also learned two Haitian cooking dishes, two different ways to cook bananas and rice with mushrooms dish.

Evening is just relaxing and reading before the generator goes out at 9pm, then the oil lamps go on for a little while. Unemployment is at 80% in LaPointe and all small cities.

Centre Medical Beraca Hospital — Emergency Fees

All charges are to be paid before the procedure is done.

Small wounds	\$.4 U.S.
Large wounds	\$.7 - \$9 U.S.
Removal of abscess	\$.10 U.S.
Large abscess	\$.12 - \$25 U.S.
Circumcision of baby	\$.20 U.S.
Amputation of toe or finger	\$.50 U.S.
Inserting a foley	\$.2 U.S.
Inserting a catheter	\$.3 U.S.
Gastroscopy or Sigmoid	\$.20 U.S.

Tuesday — January 23

The alarm sounded at 6:30am, there is no electricity but there is plenty of light. The house has a gas stove so we can heat water for tea and coffee.

Robert started work at 8am. Before all surgery everyone prayed.

I worked with Lois on child evangelism material for Bible classes. Here, there are a lot of things I can help with.

Lunch and supper are with Anita, from Pennsylvania, who has been in Haiti for twenty years. She first came as a nurse. The last couple of years changed to do Bible teaching in the three local Bible colleges. The colleges are for Haitian lay people.

Robert returned to the hospital around 2pm, because the clinic was very busy. I started to work on the computer for the hospital and House of Hope (TB Center). Electricity comes on at 8am to 3pm on surgery and clinic days for the hospital complex. Robert was through early and rested while I typed and chatted with the visiting missionary ladies.

Supper was with Anita and we had a good time learning about each others experiences.

Today, I did get some post cards and stamps from Lois. We can use United States stamps. But when the mail goes out or even comes in is when someone is going to Port-au-Prince. There is no daily mail service here in La Pointe. So if I write my postcards, we might be the next ones going back to Port-au-Prince, so then we would be home before the postcards arrive.

When its not busy at the hospital, Robert helps the x-ray technician learn English and the technician helps Robert with French.

The Haitian people believe that the only reason you get sick is because of an evil spirit. This means that when a person has surgery the nurse or doctor has to show the family member what was taken out, so they can see that the bad spirit is gone.

Wednesday – January 24

Today, two missionary wives and I are going into Port-du-Prix to shop. This sounded exciting to me. People only go in once a week because the roads are so bad. You have to use a four wheel drive Jeep. If you sit in the back seat of the vehicle you could throw your back out. The first thing I noticed is the streets are very muddy from the rain we had last night and vendors are everywhere.

The Iron Market is an open market area where people have their stalls and tables for selling their merchandise. Though many merchants were selling the same thing, I did find a pair of sandals for Robert. First I had to figure the price in Haitian (\$15) to American (\$5), then figure from Haitian (\$15) times five to Gour money, which I had.

From there we went to the grocery store. This is a trip. We had planned on making Chinese noodles for all the missionaries, so I had to find all the ingredients. Noodles were 75¢ per pound in American money. Haiti is noted for 100% pure flavor extract. Vanilla is sold for \$1.50 in American money for an 16oz. bottle and that was a must. Almond flavors were also sold the same way. Then I saw a bottle that said “Bay Rum”, we asked if that was for flavoring or drinking? The clerk at the store told us that Bay Rum was used to wash dead bodies. We had no idea as to whether we should be embarrassed or laugh, because that was definitely not the answer we expected! The vendors do not like their pictures to be taken, so all pictures we took had to be done fast. Our ride back was through two washed out roads.

Robert had clinic today and had to treat such severe cases of many skin diseases. If it rains the day before clinic day there will be less people, because they do not want to walk through all the mud. It has rained for the past two nights.

The electricity was on until 3:30pm today so I got a lot done on the computer. We also picked mangos today. The trees are tall so Robert made a fruit picker from a long stick, looped a hanger around the end. It surprised us both that it really worked. Now he has all the mangos he can eat.

Lunch and supper were with Lois and Gail. Tonight, we had a Bible study on Grace, it was taught by a lady that teaches at the college, her name is Anita.

Thursday – January 25

We were up at 6:45am, it is plenty light enough. Robert left for work around 8am. The electricity does not come on until 8:30am. I worked typing in Lois and Gail's home sitting in the screened in porch. What a life! Beautiful trees, a nice breeze coming in off the ocean. Now — open the front gate and reality comes back. Frieda, the doctor's wife from Canada, came over and I learned more about their 12 year stay in India as medical missionaries.

The hospital is getting busier. Robert even did a Gastroscope, using ancient equipment. Lunch was with the Brown family. Paul Brown is in charge of all the hospital and mission campus maintenance. Right after lunch, Robert had to hurry back for an emergency. One of the ground crew members cut his hand open and needed a surgeon.

In the late afternoon, we took a walk on the very rocky road and observed the houses and life style of the people. It is all so poor. I did take a few pictures and found the people were getting offended. Frieda joined us and we walked to the beach to watch her husband windsurf, but he had just finished.

One interesting note about Haitian people, you will not see them swimming in the ocean. In fact they are afraid of the water. They believe that when a person dies, their spirit goes into the water, and stays there for one year. At that time a voodoo lady will bring the spirit back to the body. The Haitians fear being grabbed by an evil spirit in the water.

Supper was with the Brown family and their three children.

Gail is a single missionary and is in charge of the pediatric department and House of Hope. She explained some hospital problems. She is also in charge of the hospital while Dr. Paul Echhoff on furlough. When a patient comes into the clinic very ill, it has to be determined whether surgery will help or not. If a patient is real bad or very old, surgery will not be done. The family can not afford the surgery and then a funeral. So, they must decide as to which one, and usually a funeral in the end.

Friday – January 26

Usually I do my daily writing before 9pm, but we were out tonight and arrived home at 8:55pm, just in time to start the kerosene lanterns. Luckily, Port-au-Prince has given us some electricity and it is quarter after nine.

Today was clinic day at the hospital but because of the rain last night, it was slow most of the day. The weather was very nice and cool with a slight breeze. Robert has met some real nice Haitian people at the hospital, that are helping him with his translations. In fact you can not be an employee unless you are a Christian.

Some employees are handicapped from TB, but are doing a wonderful job helping in the hospital. For example, the assistant director of the House of Hope, Linda came into the center when she was nine or ten years of age with a very bad case of TB. She was told that she was never going to walk again, so what should the family do? The choices were few and it was either put the money out, though she would never be able to work or pay it back, or, should they just leave-her. The hospital organized a plan for the family for her to receive the love and care that she needed. The care she received was different from the other several voodoo treatments she received from witch doctors. The treatments the hospital were giving her made her want to survive. While she was there she learned about Jesus and became a Christian. Today she is in her late twenties and walking around with the aid of a walker. She finds time to tell Bible stories to the children, work at the hospital and now she is engaged to be married.

There are two pianos here on the campus but all the moisture makes some of the keys stick, but this morning I did practice. They asked me to play a keyboard solo this Sunday and that thrilled me. Friday night here on campus is video night and two people have VCR's which allows everyone to get together, believe it or not we watched Apollo 13.

The electricity stayed on till eleven tonight because of an emergency surgery. Every department has its own building at the hospital. Though they do the surgeries in a clean building, then end up wheeling the patient outside through the dust, into the germs of another ward and into a room holding all sorts of patients. These rooms will hold five or six other people and all their relatives too. So the chances of getting infected are around 100%.

Saturday – January 27

*All we need is an ear to listen an eye to behold, and a heart to feel.
Oh how He loves you and me.*

Bible study was to start at 7am this morning but it rained very heavy during the night. This made the roads very bad. These conditions resulted in the meeting being called off.

Robert and I are making a very special Chinese dinner tonight for everyone. We brought shrimp crackers with us, along with Robert's hot sauce. I made the crackers and blueberry muffins in the morning. Robert prepared all the vegetables and beef in the afternoon. It rained off and on all day.

There is a lady who sells baskets and she stopped over to sell some to us, her husband is a guard at the hospital. His monthly wages are equivalent to thirty American dollars. The price for the children to go to school here is about fifty dollars a year, this includes books and uniforms. Though having three children makes it even rougher so she sells the baskets she makes to help off-set the balance for the schooling price.

Dinner was good and everyone had a good time. After we ate, we showed our video on Burkina Faso, which lasted about forty-five minutes. We realized the situations here were just the same as in Africa.

The electricity went off right at 9pm tonight.