

September, 2011 Update - Margaret Mayhew Pénicaud



In August I traveled to Haiti with the hopes of seeing our bus get out of customs and of documenting the distribution of the donations of school, medical, and humanitarian supplies. Providentially on the flight to Port au Prince I was seated beside a Haitian gentleman who turned out to be the brother of our beloved driver, **Richard Charles**. Richard perished with his two daughters in the 2010 earthquake. **Lafontant** took me under his wing and with the help of his porter friend, Soso, retrieved my luggage and escorted me through customs to **Sr. Cadet** who was awaiting my arrival in the parking area.

Our "Mission Medicale" bus had arrived in Haiti by freight boat at the end of June but during our meeting with our broker in Port au Prince we learned an error on the bill of lading was holding up the process of getting it out of customs. To expedite the correction Sr. Cadet and I traveled with **Christian Ayotte** and **Joe Chaimblain** to meet with the customs agents in St. Marc. Changing a bill of lading once sent is not a simple matter and getting anything out of customs with a duty free certificate is, as in many poor countries, a veritable act of God. Oftentimes freight is held hostage until one is willing to pay to get it out. The longer you wait the more "storage" fee you will pay. As I write this update the bus is still being held hostage.

An important part of my trip was to deliver the funds for the children who have been sponsored for the 2011-2012 academic year. Many of the children will not be able to go to school without your help. Schools in Haiti will open October 3rd this year. We encourage everyone who has sponsored a child (children) to please renew your sponsorship. For those of you who would like to sponsor a child (\$185 per year), please contact us at info@fishfarmhaiti.org. We will send you a form with more information and a picture of your child.

Some of the children in need of sponsors are pictured here below:



I visited the homes of some of the children and they are living in terrible conditions. One family's home was in an area that was surrounded by mosquito infested water since the earthquake. Those who were able to move away had abandoned their homes. Only the very poor stayed out of sheer necessity. The floor of the small concrete home that I visited was wet with humidity.

I visited families that were living in tents. One young girl was sick, sleeping in the corner of the ruins of a home, too hot to sleep in a tent and barely strong enough to sit up to have her picture taken. Another family of 12 children was living in a one room structure. They didn't know we were stopping by for a visit and I was impressed by how neat and clean the room was and how well-mannered the children were. You leave these homes wanting to give each of these children the opportunity to go to school, develop their gifts and talents, and take their place in building a better future for Haiti.

As the customs offices were closed on the weekend, Christian drove us to the South where we delivered a suitcase full of medical supplies to the clinic in Roche-à-Bateau. Along the way we stopped at **Sr. Louvia's** orphanage and delivered 60 "pillowcase" dresses that the Vineyard volunteers of "**Hope4Women**" had sewn. Their "One Girl One Dress" project believes that girls are less likely to be abducted if they are well-dressed, a sign that they are being cared for. It was an unexpected treat for these young ladies whose bedroom is a large UNICEF tent.



After spending the night at Christian's home in Les Chardonnières we traveled the dirt road further north along the coast to a town called Tiburon. Christian wanted to introduce us to **Romain**, the fisherman father of nine children, who will be the recipient of the donated 8 horsepower outboard engine that is still in the bus.

Sr. Cadet and I went swimming at the beach where Romain and his family live. We played with the children. The whole village came out to meet us.



Romain and his wife pose with seven of their nine children in front of their boat.

We spent the next day traveling back to Lilavois. As we left the fresh air and green of the rural areas and entered the overcrowded cities with its pollution and noise, we talked about the need for Haiti to create jobs outside the cities in order to decentralize the country, the need to convince the government to overhaul the bureaucracy at the customs offices, and the importance of education, education, education.

Besides knocking on doors at the customs agencies in St. Marc and Port au Prince we had the opportunity to visit **Dr. Val Abé**, the agronomist who helped us put in place our fish farm. Dr. Abé was nominated by Bill Clinton as one of the world's most influential persons and was featured in the May 10, 2010 issue of Time magazine. Val is working for the ministry of agriculture in Haiti. He gave us a tour of his facility in Croix des Bouquets.

Val, too, is having difficulty with the customs bureau. Each month he has to battle the bureaucracy to get the feed he needs for his fish.



Seven year old **Jodeleine Pierre** and her father came to stay with us at Lilavois. Jodeleine lost her mother, her older sister and her younger sister as well as her right leg below the knee during the earthquake. We spent a day trying to obtain a medical visa for her so she will be able to come to the United States for the surgery she needs. A surgeon at CT Children's Hospital in Hartford has offered to perform the surgery pro bono. The hospital estimates that it will cost \$10,000 for the use of their facility. If you would like to help underwrite the costs of her hospitalization please send your tax-exempt donation to **Fish Farm Haiti, PO Box 1803, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568** and mark "Jodeleine" in the memo.

We have all the paperwork Jodeleine needs except one letter from the surgeon stating the estimated duration of her treatment.

In conclusion I would like to give credit to the wonderful work of our Sisters, the **Daughters of Mary Queen Immaculate**. It is only because of their dedication and love of God that the Fish Farm Haiti Project exists. They are slowly rebuilding their motherhouse compound in Canapé Vert. Their numbers continue to grow as new members join their community. **Sr. Rosemane**, pictured here by the hatchery where she raises Tilapia fingerlings, continues to care for the farm. She has added 65 chicks – laying hens – and hopes to reestablish the poultry production. As for the fish, everyone agreed that the meal of Tilapia we were served was delicious and thoroughly enjoyed! Thank you, dear Sr. Rosemane. Thank you, dear Sisters. Blessings upon your work and "bonne continuation."

