

The Fond-des-Blancs Update

Volume 9 Number 4

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A Quarterly Publication of the Haiti Christian Development Fund
P.O. Box 490127 Ft Lauderdale, FL 33349-9990 - 305-968-3977

Editorial

I am using this column this quarter to make an urgent financial appeal. I try not to sound the financial alarm too often so that you may know that when I do it is a real appeal and not a fundraising gimmick. To put it simply we are in a serious financial crunch.

The immediate problem is that our cash reserve is virtually exhausted. I need you to consider making a special contribution this month to help us recover from the immediate crisis.

The long term problem is that our budget is vitally joined to the strength of the US dollar against the Haitian gourde. Simply put Haiti must have high inflation for our projected income to meet our needs. We have not had a visible increase in our revenue over the past five years. Yet the number of projects and especially staff for the primary school keep going up. We have been able to meet our obligations simply because the Haiti economy is in such a bad shape and most of our funds originate from the US.

Over the past two years we have spend several million gourdes in job creation projects but all this is budget neutral. It comes in, we spend it; and a little bit of it does help with our annual budget. Of the \$200,000.00 US dollars that we need annually only half has come in. That half translates into \$300,000.00 Haitian dollars but it is still short of at least another \$200,000.00 Haitian dollars or around \$70,000.00 US dollars. (Wasn't that confusing!).

I hope you can help us cover at least part of that deficit before the end of the year.

The Fond-des-Blancs Update is Published quarterly by the Haiti Christian Development Fund P.O. Box 490127 - Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33349-9990 and is available free of charge upon request.

J Lémec Thomas, Publisher and Senior Editor

Joy L Thomas, Editor

He giveth more grace...



Wise men still seek Him!

After eleven years in Fond-des-Blancs we decided we should take a family vacation without mixing it with deputation. We packed up the family and headed for Montreal, Canada for a two months sabbatical. There were several on going activities that required supervision but I believe that we have a competent enough staff that we could leave with peace of mind; and we did.

While the time away was restful the reverberations of this vacation is still impacting our lives. The majority of the primary school teachers left; some without notifying us until a week before the beginning of school. Reports on several projects that should have been turned in to the funding agencies were not. So for two months following our return to Fond-des-Blancs we were living in a mad house trying to fill the gaps. And since we did not do any active fund-raising now our financial situation is dreadful.

What is the value of vacation if upon your return you have to work twice as hard to try to catch up and keep up? As time bound creatures we have to appreciate every new morning that our Lord grants us wether to work or to rest. We

will never be able to replace the restful time we had in Canada and had we concluded that we should not have taken a vacation our current work load would not be very much different. We can only thank our Lord for the time He has given us to work and to play.

All that we need to have a productive and enjoyable life He has generously provided. Whenever the measure seems to be low He pours on even more. It did not start on that first Christmas in Bethlehem. That day was the realization of a promise made to Adam and Eve and conceived before the foundation of the world. If giving His son to be born in a manger was not enough, he led Him to calvary to die in our place. But more gloriously He raised him from the dead on that first Easter morning. If he did not spare His own son to meet our needs how much more will He supply all of our needs. There is no burden so heavy that He cannot help us carry. There is no pain so hard that He is not ready to share.

I hope this Christmas season will help us remember that our Lord has given the greatest gift that he can give and will continue to give us his bountiful grace!

Thomas Family Corner

THE LIFE OF THE THOMAS FAMILY IN 1995

The beginning of the year was still a time of healing for us in regard to getting over the trauma of the armed robbery that occurred a little over a month before. It took our youngest son, Josiah, and myself quite a while to learn to sleep through the night again. I heard every little noise that was made during the night, and Josiah would awaken periodically to check to make sure I was near by. He also almost daily asked when the robbers were coming back.

The two older boys seemed to be comforted by the fact that their papa had hooked up an alarm system over the doors and windows and the a neighborhood watch had been put into effect. They slept well as long as they knew the alarm was on. In reality it was/is false security, but if it makes them feel better, I am glad. I am happy to report that not only is Josiah now sleeping through the night, but he is sleeping with his brothers

in their room rather than in mama and papa's room. They are still sleeping downstairs, but we still have plans to build them a room upstairs. Hopefully that will happen in early 1996.

During the month of January our oldest son, Lemec, celebrates his birthday. He turned 10 in 1995 so he is just about to celebrate his 11th birthday this coming January. For his 10th birthday we invited several of his classmates over to spend the night. I thought it was a big act of faith on their parents part to let them come. They slept in the family room where during the robbery at least one bullet had come through the window and hit a wall. Also for his birthday the U.S. soldiers stationed in our area gave him a green beret and a certificate for bravery for his part in looking for a

solution to get rid of the robbers and save his papa. He remained extremely clear headed for a boy his age and offered the robbers his Oscar the Grouch piggy bank in which he and his brothers had been saving their gift money for a trip to Disney World. I once again want to thank those of you who sent contributions to replace that money. Lemec was overwhelmed that people would do that. Those acts of kindness are a good counter balance to the acts of terror by the robbers.

The robbers took our beloved Cherokee Jeep as their get-away car. It was the only working car we had. We were

completed his first year of pre-school and is now well into his second year. He doesn't always like getting ready to go to school, but once he is there he has a great time. He loves learning and answering questions. He and Pastor Mario's son are best friends. They both learned to ride two wheel bikes at an early age. Everyone smiles when they see these two little guys riding around. They recently rode all the way from Eli's (Mario's son) house to our house which is over a mile ride. I followed them in the car. It was great fun to watch those little legs pedaling with all their might in front of me. Once

they arrived they didn't seem a bit tired. They still spent most of their time riding around the yard and in front of our house. They should grow up with some pretty strong legs. They are in the same year at school, but they are not allowed to be in the same classroom because they talk too much and cause too much mischief.

During the month of March we celebrate Jean's birthday. He

turned 45 this year. We invited a few guys from another mission nearby and a few guys from our church and celebrated his birthday with a basketball game in the back yard. Some of the guys from our church had never played before, but they seemed to catch on quite rapidly.

In April we celebrated my birthday. If you must know, I am 3 years younger than Jean. That is the best I can do. I don't really enjoy saying my age out loud. Even when I was in my twenties I had a hard time believing I was as old as I was and now is the same. When I say my age I can't believe I am actually talking about myself. Anyway I had a very nice birthday. Ever since I was a little girl I knew my birthday

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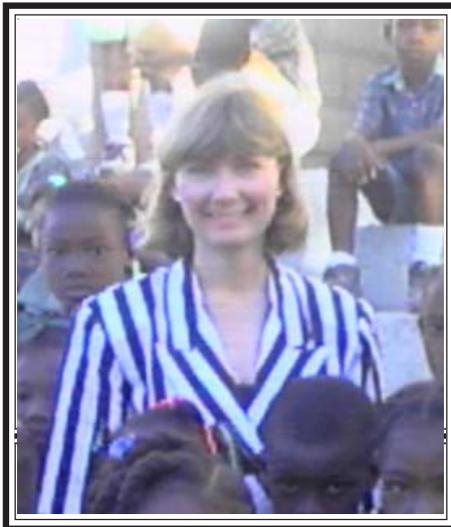
Happenings

L'Exode

L'Exode: Ecole Evangelique de Fond-des-Blancs first opened its doors October 1989 when our oldest son, Lemec, was four years old. We had been living in Fond-des-Blancs for five years and had not seen a school we thought was of the quality we were hoping for our children. Since Lemec was at the age when he needed to start schooling we had to make a decision. We could move back to the States, or we could move back to Port-au-Prince, we could send him to stay with family and go to school in Port-au-Prince while we stayed in Fond-des-Blancs or we could home school. For various reasons none of these were what we felt was right for us as a family. We had one other option. We could start a school. A school that would be beneficial to other children in the community as well as our own children. Our belief is that God relocated us to Fond-des-Blancs to make it easier for us to "feel" the needs of the people. As our son was growing we "felt" the need for a quality education for him. Thus L'Exode began with 48 students.

Each year the school adds a grade to correspond with the next grade Lemec needs. We are now up to the fifth grade. The preschool and kindergarten has close to 300 students. The elementary school has a total of 205 students. The preschool and kindergarten have had the same administrator from the beginning until now. Her name is Muriel Juste. She was Lemec's first teacher. After a couple of years she left teaching to become the full time principal. She has a staff of 28 teachers and aides to work with the children plus a kitchen staff for feeding the children. Parents are to provide one day a month to help in the kitchen and observe their children in school. We started Lemec at the age of 4, but we saw that there was very little learning stimulus in the average home so the next year we started taking students at the age of 3 just to get their minds started.

The school has gone well, but still remains a work in progress. Even though we believe our school is providing its students a better education than the other schools in the area are able to



provide it is still possible that Lemec's class has suffered some because of our inexperience. We only employ teachers who have graduated from teacher's school, but we were slow to realize how much direction they still need once they hit the real classroom world. This year I have become the principal of the elementary school to help provide that direction. In fact my title in French is Directrice and the name of my office is Direction. We didn't make that up. Those are the official titles of the principal and principal's office here. They are very appropriate for the job.

I enjoy the work, but I have found this first trimester very, very, very difficult. I knew it would be a challenge, but I wasn't prepared for major new challenges popping up every other day. Many of the challenges are from the outside such as keeping teachers from the city happy in



The children of L'Exode wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

such a rural place, making sure they are teaching the curriculum that is most important, finding substitutes for sick and pregnant teachers, and keeping track of the daily activities and scheduling of the school. Other challenges come from the inside such as wanting everything to be in order today. The more I do the more I see that could be done. It is very hard to be patient and to keep things in perspective when I see how I would like things to be, but don't have enough time in a day or a week or a month to get there. However, although the work is quite a struggle for today, I do have hope for tomorrow even though it may take many tomorrows to get there. Especially once I get all the curriculum

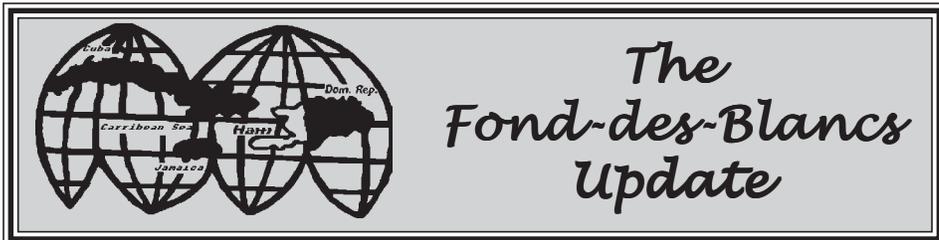
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Pastor Mario's Ordination

After ten years of faithful service to our church here in Fond-des-Blancs Pastor Mario was ordained into the ministry on November 29 of this year. It was a glorious day. Pastor Edner Jeanty the dean of the Bible school that Mario attended was in charge of the pastoral examination that Mario had to go through the day before and of the ordination service on Sunday. Throughout the weekend Mario himself was sick with dingo fever which has been going around. He held up quite well for the occasion.

Job Creation Project

Since May 1984 we have been promoting a job creation program in the Fond-des-Blancs area. Most of the activities have centered on road improvement. For those who have travelled the Fond-des-Blancs roads on a rainy day can appreciate the fact the the roads have improved substantially. In the process we have employed close to ten thousand people and repaired one hundred miles of dirt roads. This job cration project came at a time when the people of the community were hurting because of the embargo and a drought. We have had some rain and hope it will continue into the planting season soon after the new year.



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L'Exode, continued from page 3

plans in place as we want them, my work load should ease up a little.

We are still waiting on funding to finish the construction of the school. Each year we need new classrooms to hold the growing number of students. Using your donations we have been able to keep up the absolute minimum required space. We have applied for money from funding agencies, but the Haitian government has never remained stable long enough for them to process the application and give us the money. Our latest application has been completed and we are waiting on approval. If the presidential election goes smoothly, we should hear sometime early next year (1996). The funding agency we have applied to is not part of the Haitian government, (its a department of the World Bank) but is only willing to spend money in Haiti if they see democracy in progress. Do pray that our application will be approved.

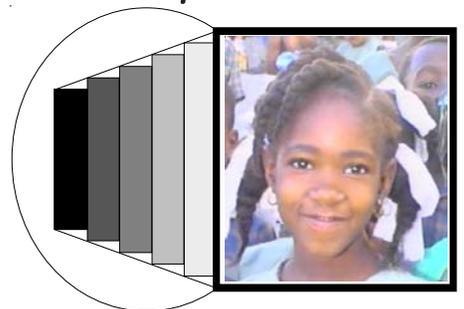
In the past my requests for supplies for the school have always received a good

response. So I am going to call upon your generosity and make further requests. Items L'Exode could use: Flash Cards (large enough for a whole class to see) - Addition, Subtraction, and Multiplication. Division cards are not necessary because they write their division problems differently than students in the U.S. Band-Aids and antibiotic ointment. Flannel graph fabric. Pencil sharpeners. Small size legos. Games such as Uno and Rummikub. It is less expensive for us if you keep packages to four pounds or less and label the outside of the package with its contents. Small labeled packages are less likely to require custom fees.

Please continue with your prayers and support for the school. Providing Haiti with intelligent, educated young people is providing Haiti a tangible hope for its future.

Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year!

*Help break a child out
of the cycle of poverty in
partnership with the
Haiti Christian
Development Fund*



If you are not yet sponsoring one of L'Exode's students, we need your help. Just send us a note indicating the sex and age of the child you would like to sponsor and we will send you a sponsorship packet with the child photo and biographical information.

We really need your help!

Continued from page 2

would fall on Easter in the year 1995. I knew this because I had looked it up in the encyclopedia. At the time I read it 1995 seemed forever away. Now it has come and is almost past. My birthday dinner was rather formal since everyone was already dressed up for Easter and I had on a nice new dress that I had bought when Jean took me shopping. That is the one and only time in our marriage when he has actually taken me shopping for a new dress.

We don't have any birthdays in May, and I can't remember anything that happened that month. In June Manise celebrated her 22nd birthday and graduated from her secondary education here which is a little more than High School in the States. Among her six girlfriends at school she is one of two of them who passed the government's final test so she can go on to the university level. We're very proud of her. She really applied herself to her studies. Also in June the children finished their year of schooling and we prepared for our big trip out of Haiti for the first time in over two years. We were ready for a break.

We flew into Ft. Lauderdale July 3rd. We watched the 4th of July fireworks from a Florida beach. I grew up watching them from an Oregon beach. I didn't think the Florida beach even began to compare with the Oregon beach, but we still all had a good time watching both the people and the fireworks. Fonia was with us and watching them for the very first time in her life. Manise was not with us because she was still in the middle of final exams. She joined us after we had had time to drive up to New York. She was a little nervous about flying by herself, but she did great. We stayed at Jean's sister house on Long Island. Jean and the girls had to apply for visa's to get into Canada. That was a big experience for the girls because the immigration office was in Manhattan. They got to ride a subway and see all those skyscrap-

ers. (The highest building in Haiti is only 6 or 8 stories.) The office they needed was on the 27th floor of one of them. Fonia cried



the first time she went up an elevator she was so scared, but after the first time she enjoyed herself. Manise really wanted to see the Statue of Liberty, but we did not have a chance to take them there.

We arrived in Canada the end of July. We stayed in a house we rented from a Haitian woman who is a friend of a friend. My parents arrived August 2nd which happens to be my mother's birthday so her grandsons got to help her celebrate her birthday. They stayed for 10 days. They travel with their own camper so there was no problem with sleeping arrangements. I had to have emergency oral surgery. I was very happy my mom was there to take care of daily



routine stuff while I recovered from the discomfort. They took the boys out on

"dates" one at a time. I know it was a great time of bonding for grandparents and grandchildren.

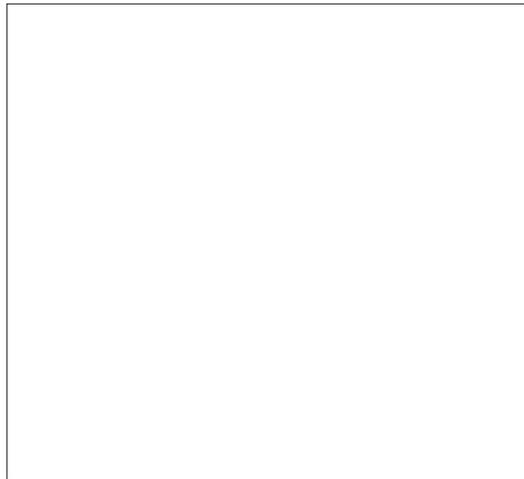
While in Canada the boys enrolled in a karate class that met four days a week. They loved it and were learning rapidly. We had wanted to get them into swimming lessons and day or overnight camps, but by the time we arrived in late July all classes and camps were full. It seems you must register back in January for the camps. That's a lot of planning ahead. The two older boys have already taught themselves how to swim even if their strokes aren't quite right. We found a beautiful public swimming pool with slides and diving boards and several children's

pools for Josisah. It was free! Can you imagine. We went every Saturday. Josiah loved the smaller slide as long as I was at the bottom to catch him. Manise loved the high diving board. She spent almost her entire time at the pool jumping from it. Lemec and Jacques went for the lower diving board, but enjoyed the high slide. Fonia only went in the water our first time there. She never went in again. The water was too cold for her liking.

Usually on Sundays we visited Haitian churches. Jean ran into tons of people he knew as a child in St. Michel de l'Attalaye and several others who knew him through friends and family in Fond-des-Blancs. His social life became quite active after we'd been there a few days. When we went up there, he had no idea he was going to see so many people he knew.

Well rested, we left Canada the first week of September. Jacques celebrated his 8th birthday the 5th of September. He often gets to celebrate his birthday while we are in the States. This time we were with friends in Columbia, Maryland. They were kind enough to supply a place for the party, a yummy cake, a picnic dinner and guests for the party. We are very grateful that we didn't have to celebrate just somewhere "on the road." From there we made the short trip to Washington DC for an action-packed half day of sight-seeing. Because we were there after labor day the

lines were very short or nonexistent so we had a chance to see and do a lot in a very short period of time. The highlight of the visit for me was visiting the White House. The rest of the



f a m i l y
laughed at my excitement, but I was totally awestruck that I was actually standing in the White House and in particular the East Room where so many historical events in my lifetime have taken

place. The highlight for the children was the Smithsonian Museum of Natural Science (believe it or not). The Museum is far more interesting than its name.

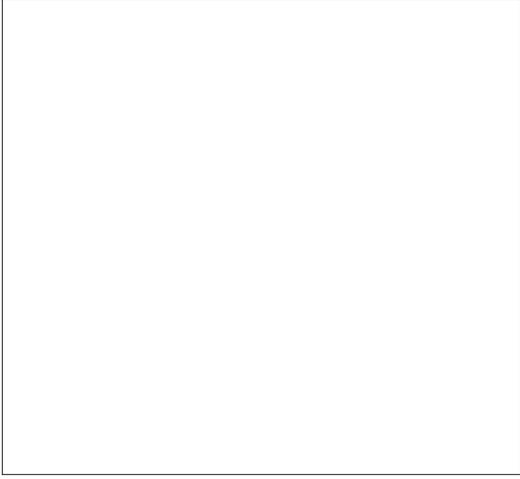
The other big stop on our way back down to Ft. Lauderdale was in Orlando to visit Disney World. A trip the boys have been looking forward to for the last few years. Personally, I'd take a visit to Washington DC any day over DW, but the boys had a great time. We visited all three parks. They got autographs of several of their favorite Disney characters, saw live stage productions of some of their favorite Disney movies, and of course enjoyed the rides. Again because it was after Labor Day the lines were short especially first thing in the morning. The boys must have rode the Dumbo ride 10 times. Another favorite was the Peter Pan ride. All of us including Josiah enjoyed the Stone Mountain roller coaster. It is quite tame, but it was great entertainment watching Josiah get a thrill from it. The girl's favorites, of course, were Splash Mountain and Space Mountain.

We arrived back in Haiti sometime in late September just in time to celebrate Fonia's 17th birthday on the 28th. She is in her second year of secondary school in Port-au-Prince. She stays with Jean's sister's family.

October brought the beginning of another school year. It was quite a beginning for me because this is my first year as the school principal of the elementary part of the school. More on that in another column. October also brought on the onset of illnesses in our family. Only Jean and the girls have

escaped illness this Fall. Lemec has had a fever three times. The first time was not too serious and the cause unknown.

The second time was caused by malaria. Malaria is terrible to experience, but fortunately the cure is quick and easy once you are diagnosed. The third time was for some kind of blood infection. He is still taking medication for that,



but feeling fine now. In spite of all his illnesses he has been able to do very well in his fifth grade class this year. He seems to be able to regain his strength quickly. Josiah also had a fever of unknown cause. We watched him very closely because he is prone to seizures if his fever gets too high. He made it through the illness without a seizure. At the time of this writing, Jacques is recovering from what we believe to be malaria. His temperature jumped the highest of the three. We hardly slept the night he had a temperature of 104 because we so busy trying to cool him down. I also had a fever, but it only lasted a couple days over a weekend so I did not have to miss any work days at school.

Jean and I are extremely busy these days. He with all the projects, but the road project is the most demanding, and me with several school projects. Throughout this letter I haven't mentioned our Lord once, but I can assure you He was with us through it all. He has healed us from emotional pain, kept us safe during our many travels, daily guides us in our work here with the people of Fond-des-Blancs and with our children. Although we have illnesses, He has provided care for us during them. We couldn't be here. We couldn't be living the lives we live without His supporting hand upon us. He is our "Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father, our Prince of Peace." We delight in honoring His birth on earth which eventually led to our being able to call out to God in His name. We wish you all a season of peace and renewal as we celebrate His birth together.

