

The Fond-des-Blancs Update

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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

Haiti is now a democratic country thanks to the miraculous work of Bill Clinton and Jean Bertrand Aristide. It is simply too bad that we still can't tell the difference down in Fond-des-Blancs. The people down here do not seem to be aware of any significant changes. There is no judicial system. From three soldiers we are down to two policemen, each with about six bullets to protect and serve the community. The 'intervasion' force has done such a good job that the U.S. has declared that Haiti is now safe for the peace keepers to take over and the U.S. soldiers to go home. So between now and the time the peace keepers arrive the few remaining U.S. soldiers are to only watch over their barracks.

I like a good game of charade. I have been observing one here in Haiti since the 'intervasion'. It got quite personal after the robbers came into our house. Since the intervention made Haiti safe for democracy I thought I could finally sleep peacefully. That was a mistake. Having been awoken in the middle of the night, threatened at gun point, I thought that if I could only get a message quickly to the nearest 'intervasion' outpost they would set up a dragnet and catch the thieves before daybreak. That was another big mistake. The message did get there less than three hours after the robbers left but was not even read until six hours later. Even if they had gotten the message they could not have done much; their intercommunication system does not work.

Word of what happened ultimately got all the way up to General Meade who sent an

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Holding to God's Unchanging Hands!

Our boys with some of the intervation soldiers stationed in our area

Back in 1986, two years after moving to Fond-des-Blancs, I reluctantly put up a fence around my house. We were doing a tree nursery and needed to keep the animals out. The section that faced the street was made to resemble a picket fence. I did not want to be fenced it. I have always abhorred fenced mission compounds. I wanted our house to always be open in the way it looks and the way people feel when they come to it. There are no irons bars, no myriad's of locks. I have always described my security system as being good enough to keep the honest person away.

Most of the people who visited us after the armed robbery suggested that I put up a big fence. Some even hinted that I should move to their neighborhoods where it would be safer.

By nature and conviction I am a pacifist. Even with a gun pointed at my head I still functioned as a pacifist. However, in the emotionally charged aftermath the dominant thought going through my mind is 'never again should my family be exposed to this kind of a nightmare.'

I also believe that security is relative. If someone can shoot the president of the United States with the best security system money can buy, a couple of determined crooks can get to me and my family no

matter what security system I may establish. A fence can be taken down. Iron bars can be sawed. A shot gun is no match for an M16 and grenade. Therefore the question: How does a pacifist (or a non-pacifist for that matter) protect his family. To do nothing on the argument that it is all relative is to evoke Camus' delemma of not wanting to kill the rats who are spreading the plague in the fear of interfering with God's plan. If this was the end, then the whole meaning of the cross of Christ would be lost. He interfered to provide a solution to the reality of sin and death.

I willingly complied with the orders of the robbers and opened my door. I have no guns. My back door was wide open. I believe it was God's grace that they announced themselves before attempting to come in. They could have walked in, kept the children hostage in another room while they operated in other areas of the house. The children were frighten but they had the comforting arms of their mother around them. Everything that happened or did not happen that night is only because of God's everlasting arm of protection over our home. In the process it demonstrated some glaring negligence on my part.

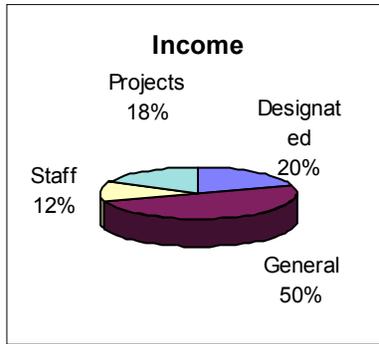
For the optimist that I am I strongly believed that it would never happen to me. If it were going to happen, it would have happened

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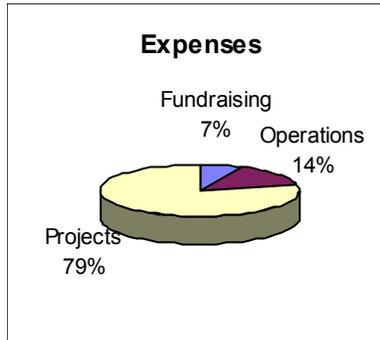
Financial Corner

INCOME AND EXPENSE REPORT 10/1/93 Through 9/30/94

INCOME	Total
Designated Income	
Agriculture	6,925.00
Education	55,361.41
Total Designated Income	62,286.41
General Income	159,011.33
Staff Support	37,235.92
Project Income	
Contributions	44,954.40
Interest on Loans	8,751.15
Members Fees	14.80
Other Income	174.12
Sales	4,379.00
Total Project Income	58,273.47
TOTAL INCOME	316,807.13
EXPENSES	
Fund Raising	
Consulting Fees	7,888.67
Mailings	862.00
Occupancy	774.00
Printing	335.00
Telephone	3,113.14
Travel	4,682.46
Total Fund Raising	17,655.27
Operations	
Bank Charges	349.55
Car Maintenance	9,594.77
Freight	5,266.77
Housing	2,718.13
Insurance	1,072.80
Miscellaneous	342.70
Office Supplies	2,963.29
Salaries	10,938.57
Telephone	432.54
Travel	1,140.50
Utilities	837.00
Total Operations	35,656.62
Projects	
Cost of Goods	73.00
Feeding Program	15,752.64
Medical Assistance	1,704.30
Miscellaneous	1,323.37
Occupancy	1,560.00
Property Maintenance	16,078.45
Relief Assistance	5,157.20
Salaries	110,052.00
Supplies	24,853.83
Training	9,431.91
Transport & Shipping	290.00
Travel	2,929.86
Utilities	1,200.00
Vehicles Maintenance	5,569.60
Total Projects	195,976.16
TOTAL EXPENSES	249,288.05
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	67,519.08



Our largest income block is from gain on exchange. Our income is primary U.S. based. The Haitian currency is not worth much these days. The exchange factor was as much as 200% at one point. We did not have any major financial crisis because of this exchange. Once the currency stabilizes our basic income will have to increase substantially or we will face serious financial difficulties.



We strive to keep our administrative cost to a minimal. Again over three quarters of our expenses are for various projects in Fondes-Blancs.

HCDF/Projects Balance Sheet As of 9/30/94

ASSETS Total

Bank and Cash Accounts	
Bank of Boston -Haiti	45,356.37
CODEF -Bank of Boston	31,459.48
HHC Cash Account	(392.13)
JLT Cash Account	(1,118.32)
MC Cash Account	27,921.19
SunBank Checking	25,012.77
US Cash Account	5,368.30
Total Bank and Cash Accounts	133,607.66

Other Assets	
CODEF Loans	70,759.72
Propeties & Equipments	132,299.72
Receivables	18,842.09
Vehicles	21,803.64
Total Other Assets	243,705.17

TOTAL ASSETS 377,312.83

LIABILITIES Total

Credit Cards	
Optima Line of Credit	2,731.70
Total Credit Cards	2,731.70

Other Liabilities	
Car Loan -MS	3,750.00
CODEF Deposits	130,326.18
MFI	(552.83)
Total Other Liabilities	133,523.35

TOTAL LIABILITIES 136,255.05

NET WORTH 241,057.78

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investigating team. They arrived while we were away. They spent a couple of hours talking to my neighbors and then another couple of hours talking to us. With this much attention surely something was going to be done. Before leaving they informed me that they cannot do anything with all the information they have just collected. They cannot intervene in internal Haitian affairs. The Haitian military will have to take it up from there. The primary reason they were here was to make sure this was not a case of targeting Americans; which it was not.

I am sure that there is a lot of good intentions in the midst of this chaos. A friend of mine has the habit of saying that they way to hell is paved with good intentions. Clinton wanted a quick fix. Now with Jesse Helms as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, he has gotten it. Aristide wanted to be back to power at any cost. Now he is with U.S. Marines protecting him around the clock. Even his nationalistic pride was not too much to sacrifice for power.

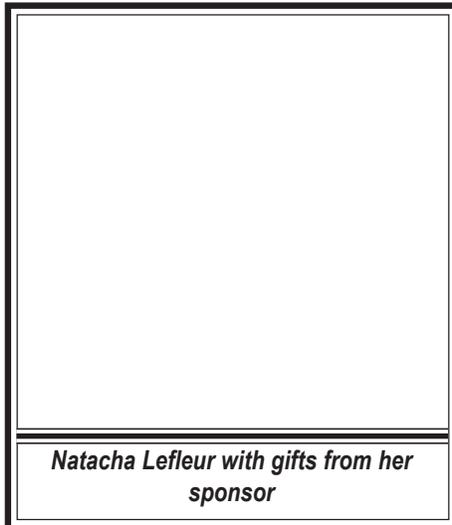
In another nine years Haiti will be celebrating the bicentennial of its independence. Wouldn't it be grand if by then Haiti could really be free from superstition, free from injustice, free from poverty and ignorance. It is all possible if we could only stop the Charade.

Happenings

Armed robbers at the Thomases: It is possible you have already received the P.S. that was enclosed with our last news letter about the armed robbery that occurred in our home. Here is the story...

At least five men arrived at our house at precisely 11:00 O'clock Saturday evening, November 26. They announced their arrival by shooting a gun and calling Jean Thomas. The minute I heard the gunshot and heard Jean's name, I understood what was happening. It is a common method of thieves here. I immediately sat up in bed and said, "Oh no!" Jean tried to calm me by saying it wasn't serious, but I did not believe him for a second. I told him I was going down to get the boys. (They sleep downstairs while we sleep upstairs.) The thieves were still outside and I was able to quietly run down and get the boys. On reflection that was the first sign that God was with us. Jacques is incredibly difficult to wake up during the night, but he woke up the minute I touched him. Most likely the gunshot aroused them even though they were not aware of what it was they heard or that they even heard it. I told them I wanted them upstairs with me. They wanted to know why so I told them there were men outside and then whispered, "Go! Go! Please!" In the meantime Jean was trying to talk to the men outside. They were telling him to let them in and he was explaining that he was getting dressed. (He told me later that he had already realized his life was in grave danger and did not want to die without his clothes on.) He then went out on the outside balcony to try and convince them that there was no need for them to come in because we did not have much money and what we had he would throw out to them. They said no, they needed to come in, they did not want money thrown at them. Jean left us upstairs and went down to let them in. He felt it better to let them in than to make them angry by making them break in. I agreed. However, the money we did have was in his briefcase upstairs. While he was downstairs with them I was praying aloud for Jean for the boys to hear in hopes that would give them some comfort. Every so often a gunshot would go off outside to keep the neighbors away. I understood that, but was still worried they might want to wound Jean to make him cooperate more. Because the money was upstairs he was obliged to bring them up. Three of them came up while one stayed downstairs searching and one stayed outside shooting his gun and calling to the guys inside. The guy downstairs took our CD/cassette player, a camera, and the boy's soccer ball, but he left

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Road Project - The second phase of the road project began the second week of December. This phase is smaller than the first. We are doing 34 miles of road with a work force of 1500 men and women. We are doing two sections. One section is south of us coming out further south on the main road. This will make trips for people from this area going South much shorter. The other section is one those of you who have visited would recognize. It is the section we always traveled for the first few years we lived here until it deteriorated so badly we had to make a road elsewhere. Now that we have had experience with road building, we are attacking it. The road crews are enthusiastic and are doing good work plus we were able to budget in a tractor and several dump trucks into this phase which have been a big help. The funding for this phase will end the end of February. The third and final phase should begin in April.

L'Exode - Construction on the new classrooms has not begun yet, but we are gathering materials on the work site for that purpose.

The elementary school put on a lovely musical Christmas program this year under the direction of the school directress, Marie France Jeanty, and the music director, Etienne Chery. Our oldest son, Lemec, was a singing wiseman. Jacques recited a poem about the star and sang with his class choir.

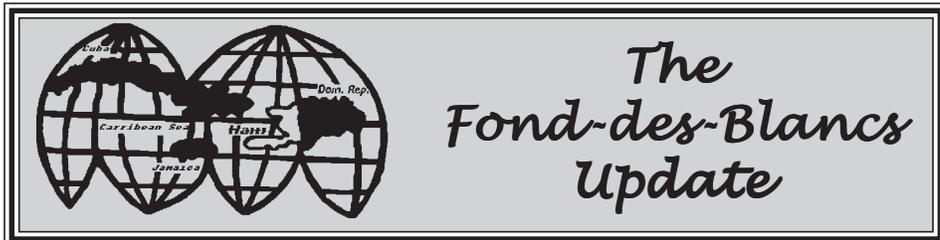
We are still able to offer a large hot meal to all the children each day. One main item on the menu is fortified wheat bulgar served with legume or a bean sauce. Personally, I think it is terrible stuff, but the children seem to love it. Lemec even requested it as part of his birthday dinner. I had to ask the school cook to fix it for me.

The school is doing well academically, but for the moment we are lacking two teachers. One of the kindergarten teachers, Marie Seth Badio, wife of our road engineer, gave birth to a 7lbs baby girl January 7. They have named her Sarah Lynn. Marie Seth, of course, is off on maternity leave. The other teacher we lack is for 4th grade. The 4th grade teacher, Merlita Lundy, has been diagnosed with tuberculosis. Since this disease is highly contagious, we have had to give her an extended leave of absence. Full treatment for tuberculosis takes 12 months. We are looking for a replacement. In the meantime, the directress of the school is teaching the class. Please pray we will find a new teacher quickly.

Tree Nursery - All the seedlings from last season's planting were used for the road project. They were planted along the sides of the road for beautification and erosion control. The trees from this season will also be used for the same purpose.

Credit Union - Credit Union members may now buy official bank books for their account. In the past all we had to give them was a sheet of paper. A book is definitely easier to handle than a sheet of paper. We are applying for a grant for the credit union to be used to offer more loans to people who would like to go into business. If the grant is approved, money would be available to merchants already in business, but would like to expand it to people who would otherwise have no way of starting a business. Some loans would be for private business and others for cooperative businesses. Please pray that this grant will be approved.

Agricultural Project - This project was semi put on hold during the embargo. We are hoping to get an irrigation program going, but could not afford to do it under the embargo. Instead of introducing new vegetables we gave out corn and millet seeds that have proven to do well in semi arid conditions. We were, however, able to get a grant that enabled us to sell farming tools for less than half the price for which they were selling in market. Hundreds of hoes, shovels, picks, and rakes were sold in this way.



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Address Correction Requested

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during the days of Cedras, not after the return of Aristide and the presence of the U.S. forces. I delighted in living in Fond-des-Blancs because it was so remote that a thief would not come that far for an armed robbery. Consequently I took no measures whatsoever to fulfill my responsibility as protector of my family.

Would you tell a lie to save a life? That has always been the basic ethic question; whether you would take the absolute or the hierarchical approach. No, I will not lie but trust God to save that person's live or certainly I will lie and regretfully confess afterward. In the case of my family, I would say blot my name out of the book of life if necessary to insure their life; temporal or eternal.

I believe that only God can protect. There is nothing I can do that can insure that my family will never again be terrorized. But as a father I need to draw a certain perimeter of safety around my family, my first field of responsibility. I may not build a fence but I will secure the house. I will make sure that only a very determined person can penetrate and only after a long period of work and sweat. I will invest as much time as I can in community organizing to insure that a thief would have to think twice before venturing into Fond-des-Blancs.

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the TV and VCR and the lap computers. Jean gave the guys upstairs the thousand dollars he had in his briefcase all the time explaining to them what good luck it was for them that we had any at all because we hardly ever keep large amounts of cash in our home. He explained that the only reason we had that much was because he had planned to buy two motorcycles that day, but he ended up only buying one. After they got the money one of them asked me for my wedding ring. He did not use the word I know for ring so Lemec had to tell me to give him my ring. I told the thief I would try, but that it was very difficult to take off. He stood by me watching me twist and turn it until it came off and then held out his hand for it. He asked me if I had any others. I just held up my hand to show him they were empty. I cannot tell you how heart wrenching it was to hand over my precious wedding ring. The diamond was only 1/7 of a karat and the gold was only 10 karat, but it was "my" wedding ring. The same one that took my ring pulled a cord away from the wall (ironically, one that went to an unworking security system) and tied Jean's hands behind his back and told him to lay down. Jean chose not to lie down, but sat down leaning against the wall facing the thieves. Of the three upstairs, one was rummaging through our drawers, one was staying in the shadows, and the other was pointing his gun at Jean and demanding the forty million dollars we had received for the road project. These guys had not randomly chose our house because it was the biggest in the neighborhood. They knew exactly where they were coming, who they wanted to see, and what they expected to get. Unfortunately for us, their information on what they expected to get was not in the least correct. Forty million dollars is what was designated for the road projects of all of Haiti not just to us. However, when he asked for the forty million, I was not thinking about specifics. I answered him, "Yes, but we do not keep it here because we know people like you might want to come get it." Later, a friend told me she didn't think I should have said that, but it didn't seem to insult him, and it seemed a logical answer to me at the time.

During all this the boys and I were sitting on the bed. Jacques had by this time crawled under the covers, both, he said, to hide and to pray. Lemec was sitting next to me and Josiah was sitting on me. Josiah was terrified, but never wailed uncontrollably which enabled me to keep my wits about me a little better than if he had. Lemec was watching the man who was waving the gun at his papa and asking for more money. Lemec was frantic, but not hysterical. Frantically, in Creole, he told me to give them the money.

I responded in Creole so the thieves could understand that I would if I could, but we had no more money to give them. The guy was still pointing the gun at Jean and threatening to shoot if we did not give them more money. Lemec's mind was at work looking for a solution to save his Papa's life. He hurriedly told me to give them his Oscar the Crouch bank in which we have been saving money for a trip to Disney World for several years. (That trip was suppose to have taken place September 1994, but the tightened embargo closed down the airport, and we were not able to go.) My reaction to Lemec's suggestion was one of surprise because I had not given that money any thought. I jumped from the bed and got the bank out of the drawer and handed it to the thieves. They pointed their flashlight in side to see its contents. It was full of quarters, but also had one, five, and ten dollar bills in it. In hopes it might encourage the thieves I pointed out to them that it was all American money. It's silly, but even as I was giving it to them I was trying to think of a way of keeping Oscar the Crouch, but I didn't come up with a quick enough idea and they took Oscar the Crouch and the money. Also at the time I gave it to them I looked over at the bed and remember thinking if they shoot us maybe Jacques will survive because the way the covers were rumpled, you couldn't tell there was a little person under there. I mention that only to let you know that we all felt in mortal danger the whole time the thieves were with us. I was then and continue to be very proud of the way Lemec remained calm looking for a solution to save his Papa's life. The money in the bank was barely one hundred dollars, definitely not the amount the thieves were looking for, but perhaps the drama of a child giving his money was enough to let the thieves know we truly did not have any more money to give them despite what they had been led to believe.

Once they were satisfied that there was no more money around they left us and went downstairs. I don't know why I did not jump up immediately to try to untie Jean, but I didn't. We were busy listening to hear they had actually gone when we heard them coming back upstairs. They took Jean back down with them. At least the last part of their journey to our house had been on foot. Now they were deciding to take our car and motorcycles. They needed Jean to give them the keys. One of them started the motorcycle and immediately fell down. They abandoned the idea of taking the cycle, but did take the car. We were sure after they left that we would see the car soon because it did not appear they really knew how to drive. They had to untie Jean to start it for them. However, as of this date, we have not seen our car again. As soon as I heard the car

driving away I called Jean's name wanting to make sure he was still with us and had not been taken captive with them. He did not hear me and did not answer and Lemec would not let me call again. It was an immense relief when he came back upstairs to join us. Jean came over and kissed me and held my hand for a moment. Then we prayed out loud with the children thanking God for being with and protecting us from harm, for giving the right actions and reactions that did not anger the thieves into using their guns on us, for keeping us relatively level headed in a time of great fear for each other. The thieves were in our home for a full 45 minutes.

Only a few minutes after they left our house they crossed a Fond-des-Blancs truck coming in. The owner of the truck recognized our car and naturally assumed it was either Jean or our driver possibly taking someone sick out so he slowed down to talk. His doing that scared the thieves and they shot him. The bullet passed through his left shoulder and came out his back. I do not know the circumstances of how he got to our house, but he managed to walk into our house. Since we no longer had a car our neighbor had to put him on the motorcycle in front of him so he could hold him on like a child. They traveled like that for a mile and a half to reach the Fond-des-Blancs clinic. The doctor there could not do a lot for him except assure him the wound was not life threatening as long as he got to Port-au-Prince for surgery. The clinic had a car that was able to transport him. We praise the Lord that the surgery went very well and he is now back home with his family.

The thieves were definitely willing to shoot people. It was only God's presence that saved us. The next morning 12 bullet shells were found in our yard. All of them Haitian military issue. While they were in our home they called each other by military names such as sergeant, lieutenant, commander, etc. Jean is sure by some of their actions that they truly were ex-military men. Since Aristide has started down-sizing the Haitian army robberies and murders have shot up. The Haitian military saw well in advance what was their fate and made sure they had guns put aside that the American military did not find in command posts or barracks. These men are now using these guns to terrorize the Haitian country side. There is not enough American military here to control them. The American soldiers assigned to our area are now down to only nine men. Their post is a 45 minute drive from our house. At the time of our robbery no Haitian police had been reassigned to Fond-des-Blancs. We immediately sent someone on a motorcycle to alert the U.S. soldiers, but

they did not arrive until nine the next morning. The guy on duty that night assumed the note we sent was in French and didn't even look at it until the translator joined him later in the morning. The translator took it, told him it was in English and who it was from. They immediately jumped into action and got out here, but it was hours too late for them to do anything about it. Some military investigators (CID) came out a couple of days later and spent a day talking to our neighbors, combing the grounds, and taking our descriptions of the men, but mostly what they wanted to know was if I believed they had targeted me as an American. I do not think so. The thieves seemed surprised to find I was white. When they saw the boys and me they asked, "Is this his wife? Is this his family?" Neither Jean nor I responded since to us the answer was obvious. Over a week later a Haitian general (out of uniform) came to take a report. We received a lot of attention, but so far to no avail. Our car has not been found nor has anyone been apprehended for the crime.

Aristide is back in the presidency and Haiti is mostly off the U.S. nightly news, but things are not well in Haiti. Only a few prices of food items went down after the embargo was lifted, most, especially food items from the U.S. are continuing to rise in price. The ex-Haitian military no longer with an income are resorting to crime to make a living. Two friends of ours were robbed at gun point at a road block put up by thieves in the night. Two big buses came up behind them and in the commotion of all that they were able to slip away on foot. They ran for two hours to get to the Haitian police. Their response was, "Oh, those guys are doing that again." It wasn't until our friend started speaking English on the telephone that they jumped into action and took him to the American soldiers. When they got back to the scene of the crime the buses were gone plus one of their cars. No one else reported the crime even though the buses were full of people. Perhaps they realize the police are not very motivated to help them so why bother. A month and two days after our robbery a family about three miles from us were robbed at gun point. One young man was shot and killed and one older man was wounded in the leg. We are not certain if they were the same group that attacked us.

On a lesser level than these crimes, but still something we thought would improve after the embargo, but instead has gotten worse is things going through customs. If it hadn't been for my parents coming (more on that later) the children's Christmas would have been pretty dismal gift-wise. Everything including food and books which have never had to go through customs before were held.

It was a month after Christmas before we finally received all our boxes out of customs, some of which had been there since last June. Also our "new" car which has been waiting in the Florida for the embargo to be over has been sitting in customs for weeks. We had been using a small borrowed pick-up, but now are without a car until we can wade through customs.

Do not cease praying for Haiti just because the embargo has been lifted and Aristide is back therefore implying democracy is back. Life in Haiti is as miserable as ever for most people.

We are into the second phase of the road project. It is a smaller phase than the first, but we are still able to give employment to 1500 people in the Fond-des-Blancs area. The price of cement has gone down so we will now be able to begin much needed construction on the school. The credit union is still a safe place for people to deposit their money. Our church is still going strong. Always when working for God there are rays of hope.

As you continue to pray for Haiti, I ask that you remember to pray for us as a family too. After the robbery there was a lot of emotional healing that needed to take place, especially, it seems for me. Perhaps some of Jean's healing has come from taking action. He has been working hard to organize a community watch system, not just for our area, but for all of Fond-des-Blancs. It is coming together, but slowly. We had one set back when a victim was put in jail instead of the thieves (which is the habit of the old judicial system), but Jean moved quickly to get him out of jail. It was the American soldiers who helped him do it. Even though Haiti is getting new police and retraining some of the old, as of now, nothing is being done about the corrupt judges who have been in power for years and are still functioning on what are suppose to be the "old" ways. The International Police have their work cut out for them.

I have said in past letters that we were willing to stay here even during all the chaos and threats of invasion because we knew God was our protector. The night of the robbery gave us strong evidence that He truly is. At one point the guy holding the gun on Jean attempted to cock the gun to put the bullet into its firing chamber, but there had already been a bullet in the chamber so when he cocked the gun to put a bullet in the one already in popped out onto the floor. It is unnerving to realize that a nervous finger on the robbers part could have killed Jean. However, when the first bullet popped out, it seemed to surprise the robber and he went

looking for it on the floor, thus forgetting that he was suppose to be shooting Jean. I am convinced that God's hand was holding the hand of the robber and his gun. Plus as I mentioned before, He kept us relatively calm which enabled us not to do anything that angered or provoked the thieves into shooting directly at us. This is very clear to me, but still the big emotional fear attacked me after they left. Both Jean and I went over and over the events in our mind trying to decide if there was something better we could have done which could have prevented even less to happen. In the end we can only say we were in God's hands and there are too many ifs about any other actions we might have taken. I was greatly disturbed for several days whenever I thought about the gun pointed at Jean while he was tied up. I kept asking myself was I just going to let them shoot him? How could I just sit there? On the other hand, what was I going to do against three armed men?

As you might imagine since the robbery several of the Psalms have jumped out at me in ways they never have before as well as many passages in the New Testament of Christ's caring for us. One of my all time favorites since my youth and even more so now is Romans 8:28-39. I read it daily for several days after the robbery and continue to read it often. I had a Sunday School teacher who made a big deal of emphasizing the words "all things" in verse 28. Yes, even something as bad as this experience can and will be used for our good perhaps (hopefully) to make us stronger for what may be ahead for us and enabling us to better help someone else deal with a similar situation. Plus, who can shrink in fear when reading the following verses, one that asks, "Who can be against us if God is for us?" and then the verse telling us Christ is interceding for us and the verses telling us so beautifully how nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lastly, a hymn that God brought to my mind one night when I was struggling with sleep is "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms." It is not a song sung in Haiti so it has been several years since I have sung it and I could only remember the chorus: Leaning, leaning, Safe and secure from all alarms; Leaning, leaning, Leaning on the everlasting arms. I sang that chorus over and over to myself that night. The next morning I was able to look up the rest of the words in a hymnal my home church in Oregon had sent me.

As this New Year begins my prayer is that all of us will be able to find our peace Leaning on the Everlasting Arms. Thank you so very much for your continued prayers for us as a family and for the embattled country where God has put us.