

Haiti has been a nation in trouble long before we arrived there. It continues to be a place where hope comes in small rays, diminishes and dies quickly. I cannot say how we have affected the lives we came into contact with. I hope that we left a lasting impression on some, but my heart aches for Haiti and their long history of poverty and government corruption. I do not see a solution for their trouble in the immediate future.

But I can tell you about the people who changed my life while I was there. I will forever be indebted to them for the shared experiences, the joy and the friendships that have developed because of our time spent in Haiti.

Nathan-early on you could see that he wasn't here to do this once and move on. He took a vested interest in the work being done by Samaritans' Purse. He was part of one of the first crews to leave the compound to help with a "hygiene" team. I hope that in years to come I will hear that our week in Haiti was just the beginning of his true life's mission.

Amiee was so determined to go on this trip. She is just 18, but willing to carry her load. Come to find out she speaks French pretty well, which had the young Haitian men all a flutter. She worked hard and continued to work through a swollen ankle that this "mom" could not keep her off. We shared a distinct "gag" reflex for rice & beans.

Sara danced in the rain. Literally! She was the fireplug in the group. She has a contagious smile and reminds me how it was to be young. In spite of class deadlines, she took numerous trips off the compound to visit the Haitian people. Her most precious pictures of the time in Haiti are of the children. She worked hard on site and late in the evenings providing FB pictures and updates for all our loved ones at home.

Pavel-so easy going and always taking grief from the other guys but nothing was more precious than hearing his excited little girl say, "HI DADDY-I MISS YOU SOOO MUCH!" after he surprised her with a call from Haiti. Running here and there to get some more rebar cut or help attach the roofing - Oops, that piece slipped.....

Dick, the quiet one. Always doing the job that needed to get done. His favorite of course was applying stucco - he only wished that we had time to complete the inside. Digging ditches, making concrete, lugging buckets ... he did it all with his quiet spirit or maybe he was just contemplating how he got stuck with this bag of nuts.

Richard- has always had a heart for the Haitian people. It was interesting to watch his interaction with the Haitians as he tried to reestablish the use of the language. He rarely got it right on the first try but that never stopped him from picking up a conversation with the Haitians or anyone else that would happen along. I enjoyed watching him relax enough to enjoy snorkeling.

Tony- Mr. Sunshine-where DID he get that smile? There's nothing worse than trying to keep 19 people on task. He did it with humor, grace and a mean old whip. He made sure we took one mandatory break each afternoon for the goat races. Oh, and his hearing loss ... it's very intermittent. And God forbid you stack a Lowe's bucket on top of a Home Depot bucket.

John R - the #2 man. If Tony kept us on task, John kept Tony on task. The "plumber" for this job. He could have plumbed it the Haitian way, but they figured out how to make it work in spite of varied plumbing supplies. He was so kind as Sara wrapped his small sore with a full roll of medical tape. Because of that I forgave him for the "women" jokes. He pushed through even though life was tough at home.

John N- the plumber's apprentice. For days John worked to help ensure that everything would come out ok in the end, if you know what I mean. Then he was on to concrete and buckets and buckets and buckets and buckets.... then back to make sure they didn't pour concrete into his plumbing...

Bri-the energizer bunny-she never stopped. She joined this ragtag group in Miami and they became her family immediately. She sucked up more Styrofoam shavings than any of us - she and Annette wrapped the whole house and she is all hyped up about taking Tony to the Amazon next year. She was a fish when we went snorkeling. Hey Bri-what was your high and low today?

Annette-had a determination to make sure the extra clothes and toys reached the families in the shelters. And thank goodness she held firm in that commitment because sharing those gifts was the most memorable time of the trip for me. She never stopped working, often to the embarrassment of the rest of us.

Bob - the master of most trades. What an asset he is to any building team. He was there to get a job done and he was all over it. It was hard to get him stopped once he got going. Thanks to him, Tony, and a few others, we have mostly straight lines throughout the house. Did you ever find your toothbrush??

Jacob - a young man who held his own with the old men. I'm sure there were many things Jake learned or experienced on this trip, but nothing as exciting as learning to open a coke bottle with another coke bottle. Oh, and there was the friend he found while snorkeling, and Bri beating him at Dutch Blitz.

Tod -like so many others, first to arrive and last to leave the site each day. Did whatever needed to be done and then some. He works with special needs kids so you know he was still on the job hanging out with us. He'll think twice about washing his clothes in any type of bug deterrent and his new best friend is his "Monkey Butt".

Dustin, who rarely rested while on site - who within minutes after arriving at a shelter saw a man struggling to hang a door and went over and hung it for him. I

enjoyed trying to take pictures to meet the request of Cole at home-more pictures of daddy - more pictures of bugs.... If Dustin was done for the day, the rest of us knew we had worked 2 hours too long. He was gracious to Bri when he showed her the many wonders under the sea while snorkeling and he shared all of his snacks.

Dave-who made us cool tools, such as templates for measuring how far rebar needed to be from the wall & how high the gravel was to be filled – the really cool “girl” jobs. He told the girls to ask dumb questions just to get a reaction out of the boys. The last day when I was cleaning up I saw what looked to be a goat cut out of wood-what was that all about Dave?

Chris-each evening after having his butt kicked at Uno, Chris would check FB. There was a lot of pressure to become his “friend”. He also was the self appointed electrician’s assistant and he was the “big man on compound” when wearing his green tool belt. He felt we were not posting enough pictures of him working but every time you tried to take a picture he stopped to smile. I’m sure he was the “Sharpie” bandit.

Mike-the answer to the sodaholics nightmare. Early on Mike arranged to have soda brought to us each morning. Nothing tasted so good in the heat and humidity. Of course he would have been really amazing if he could have come up with Diet Coke. But alas, it was not to be. Mike got the fun job of controlling any “Flashpoints” between Lazarian , SP staff and our motley crew; a thankless job to say the least. You left your own “stone” on that island, Man! What more could you give? You brought us all home safe and sound- I’m not sure we’ll ever get back in the country but.....

Sandy- the little brother and the electrician extraordinaire. We didn’t see him for days then out would pop some wiring and boxes and we knew where he’d been and what he had been doing. And look! All the lights and stuff are in the right places. The younger Haitian workers were drawn to him immediately and at the shelter he had all the little boys’ attention.

What a team we were. What a testament of God having a place for each person regardless of age or skill. Together He works all things together for His for good.