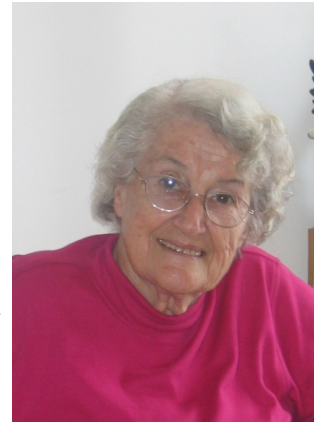


December, 2005

During a recent visit to Haiti I was once again immersed in the many lovely views here in this tropical paradise. There are the wrinkled brown mountains that almost seem to scrape the deep blue of the Caribbean skies; the clean sweep of the white sand against the blue green of the ocean that constantly dashes over the coral reefs leaving a whitened foam frothing in its wake; the jungle-like growth of flowers, shrubs, bushes under and around the trees which adds splashes of color on the hills and along the shaded paths that wind up and down the mountain ravine; the mountain streams that tumble joyously down over the boulders and rocks wending their way to the ocean. passing by knots of Haitian women sitting on the rocks scrubbing their week's laundry and spreading it out to dry on the clean river stone where the hot sun will soon bleach the sheets to a snowy white. Here and there are the clusters of little mud huts with thatched roofs and naked brown children playing in the yard. Chickens and goats are underfoot and mama or papa is busy at work, perhaps weaving baskets or hats, cooking over a charcoal fire, pounding the hulls off of grains of rice or spreading out cocoa or coffee beans to dry in the sun. Oftimes, high up on the hills you can hear the chant of the farmer who sings as he tills the soil to plant his garden.



Joanna Hodges

Yet there are many sad things here in Haiti. In this lovely land there is hunger and malnutrition; there is ignorance, superstition and fear of the spirits; there is disease, suffering and poverty, burned out gardens and erosion of the soil, tropical rainstorms that swell the tiny rivers until they flood the towns and villages in their paths, overpopulation and unemployment. There are too few schools and too few hospitals. These are but a few of the many problems that confront those who work in Haiti

50 years ago Hopital Bon Samaritain was built to minister to the daily needs of the folk in this rural area which now includes some 300,000 in the surrounding valley and mountains. Many look to this hospital with the hope that when they or their loved ones are sick or in poor health the hospital is there to help. How often have I have heard them say. "But where would we go if you did not see my child. We have no other hope." Even though the crowds who come to the clinic now include more than can be seen, enough tickets are passed out by the doctor in triage each morning, as he chooses those who are in the greatest need. But he reserves a few for emergencies that may turn up later in the day. As the days go by, and as the people return again and again, they find their way to the consultation room for the coveted time under the scrutiny of the doctor or nurse and with lab tests, X-rays, to help solve the problem they then gain the needed medicines and shots which will put them on their way to a cure.

Right now Haiti is a mess. There are outrageous murders, and crimes everywhere in this land of almost total anarchy, chaos, duplicity, corruption. Hopelessness, rampant robberies, and even kidnappings are common. People say that they are almost afraid to sleep, the terror is so great. One man told me recently when I was there, "Mme Doc, we are used to misery and we know how to deal with it, but the terror that is out there now is insupportable." And then to add to the misery this year there was multiple hurricanes that took the lives of many when nearby rivers flooded and some homes were lost...they just slid down the embankment and many lives were lost.

Today there are many problems facing those who are trying to run the hospital in this rural town of Limbe with the lack of needed supplies and the increasing costs of food, fuel, milk, medicines and medical supplies has become overwhelming. Every day it seems as if the world is at the hospital door....The Elderly, the Youth, the Children, the Unemployed, the Ill-clad, the Poorly Nourished, the Confused, the Violent, the Successful, the Entrepreneur, the Student, etc. The sick continue to come daily. Each one is seeking for an answer to their problems and all are looking for the hope of a more healthful future. Indeed each day, the task seems almost overwhelming as the situation in Haiti continues to degenerate. But our staff has learned to follow the words of Jesus who said 'Inasmuch as you do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.' 'And Lo, I am with you always.' One of the nurses told me recently when I was there, that even when her strength was faltering those words gave her strength and encouragement and hope because she knows she is not alone in this task of providing health care....a task laid upon her by her Lord. At the present time we have a medical staff of 6 Haitian doctors, 5 Haitian RN.s and a local staff of 150 who are co-workers in this continuing daily drama of sharing God's love and His concern that all might taste of His salvation. When I was there in September, several of our patients came to me to tell me how grateful they were for the hospital. Several of them told me, "Don't let anything happen to this hospital, we depend upon it in our greatest need. It brings us "Hope." To many it is 'God's Hospital.' It was founded in 1953, and has been serving the folks in the Limbe Valley for over 50 years. In 1958 Dr Hodges arrived and served as director for 37 years until an unexpected heart attack in 1995. It has now been 10 years since the death of Dr Hodges, but those who continue to labor there wish to share in his dream that the hospital would always be like of the Tree of Life with leaves of healing for the nations and so provide for the physical and spiritual healing of a suffering humanity. (Rev 20:2)

This is our present situation. Part of our budget comes from local fees. To keep prices low, we have always depended upon gifts from abroad to help underwrite the daily operating expenses which we use to buy medicines, milk for the orphan the handicapped and malnourished children, insulin, syringes for the daily shots in the diabetic clinic, etc. Also we need funds to buy not only medical supplies, but supplies such as repair parts, sheets, diapers alcohol, gauze, cotton and gloves. We also need funds to purchase diesel fuel so that our generators can continue to provide the 24 hr current, so needed to run a rural hospital with modern equipment. The reality at year's end is that with the increasing costs, the donations have not met the greater needs imposed upon the hospital this year. It has been like scrapping the bottom of the barrel to meet the demands at each month's end.

Even though life seems rather fragile, the message that God loves and cares and that He will never abandons us is shared as patients are reassured that God will offer hope to one and all who believe in Him. So this is a plea to each of you that the needed funds to continue this mission of mercy in a rural town might be found. The Christian message contains the cultural healing which can transform Haiti at its heart. Can we count on you? Would you like to do your part in sharing the love of God through the healing ministry in the daily clinics in Limbe, Haiti?

Please send your donations direct to the address below making out your check to HBS Foundation, Inc., all gifts are tax deductible. This will enable us to continue to give the needed care to those who depend upon the hospital being there 24 hrs daily to meet their medical needs during these critical times. This is an urgent request as funds are so needed to continue this mission of mercy in this rural town of Limbe.

We also wish to thank those of you who have so graciously sent gifts to HBS over the past months to assist us in this mighty task. We have been most grateful and hope that you will understand this greater need at year's end and perhaps will increase your gift to help us during these most troublesome and stressful days.

Please send your gifts to:

HBS Foundation, Inc.
PO Box 1290
Lake Worth, FL 33460
Tel 561-533-0883
Email: hbsfl@bellsouth.net

Some of you have asked about my role at HBS, I hope to continue to write monthly newsletters and make periodic visits to Limbe and perhaps stay longer depending upon the situation. My heart is still in Haiti. The hospital is a help to so many. I also miss my many friends there. Keep praying for this troubled land that is so in need of God's redeeming love.

Joanna Hodges