

MEET SOME VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE FROM A VERY SPECIAL PLACE

Reflections of Jane Howard and Jack Heck



Their homes sprout from the salt flats at the edge of the sea, creating a picturesque border for the village of Anse a Galets. Mere twigs form the fences that designate their personal space. In dry conditions, the ground is as smooth and hard as pavement but add a little rain and it becomes slick as ice and mucky as clay. Fashioned from woven sticks held together with a primitive mortar mixture, with a roof of thatch or sheet metal, and that unpredictable earth for the floor, who could call this home?

Very proud families sweep the dust from the hardened ground in front of their door and landscape their property with conch shells and stones. It is an honor to be invited into the private interior of these quaint shelters.



My first impression is always the same, cozy and efficient. There are usually two rooms divided by ragged curtains and only one bed for an entire family of five or more. I wonder who or how many sleep in that bed. The 'mattress' is often a rice bag filled with clothing. The legs of the bed are elevated on rocks or broken concrete to prevent them from sinking into the ground. I see no protection from mosquitoes, here, where malaria and dengue fever are so prevalent. A few dishes and utensils are stacked on a rickety table covered with a

cloth to keep the dust out. Cooking is done outside using a charcoal burner while buckets of water carried from the public fountains provide water for dishwashing and bathing, all done outside. There is no family latrine. 'Trash to treasure' comes to mind as someone else's cast-off items are carefully hung on nails or looped over rafters. I wonder what it would be like to wait out a storm in this structure. The ground would be flooded. Surely the roof must leak and the sound of the wind and rain on a metal roof would be deafening! Does everyone huddle together on the one bed? How would you entertain toddlers or older children?



These are the families of the saline. They have a very meager lifestyle, surviving day to day, but grateful and proud of what they have. Food and education for their children is always a priority. Although their

lifestyle is a stark contrast to our own, we find a connection in the love of God and family. Their spiritual wealth is beyond description.

The abject poverty of the saline fades into the background as we wait for the sun's orange crest to break over the mountainscape of the mainland each morning at 6:00 AM. This is truly the best place to begin a new day.

With just one hour before schools begin, children are lathered in suds in a basin by the house before putting on their school uniform. We make a point of praising those we see brushing their teeth. It's great fun to toss a tennis ball into a yard and see the mother's joy when her children receive the gift, jumping with delight. Strolling through twisting paths, we love to give children and families Polaroid pictures, another way of letting them know we feel they are beautiful and special. Although our Creole vocabulary is very limited, there is a lot of non-verbal communication. Jack tosses a Frisbee with 9-year-old Mikins, praising him as he gains confidence in his new skill. Jack decided our last Frisbee should belong to Mikins. On our final morning walk, Jack made a

special visit to Mikins' house to give him his own Frisbee.



Since our first dental mission to LaGonave in 1983, we've come to know several families from the saline area. Wazelia was just ten years old when we found her broad smile and jubilant character entertaining as she walked with us through the village. She asked to hear Jack's watch tick and that was the beginning of our friendship that continues to this day. Each year our circle of friends grows as our lives are changed by some of these very special people in this very special place on LaGonave Island.

Last year our hearts were deeply touched when we spent some time with the children of the saline who come to Pastor Foglas' house at noon, six days a week, for a meal of rice and beans provided through a feeding program administered by WISH. The children bring their own bowl and sit on old tires or the rocky ground and wait patiently to receive their only meal of the day; rice and beans, no drink.

As we formulated plans for our dental mission in February, we couldn't forget those children of the saline. Wouldn't it be great if we could change their menu for even one day and make them all feel very special? Wouldn't it be great if we could pack our bags full of love from the people of Port Huron to the children of the saline? Let's give them a party! And that's just what we did!!!

Cheritable, who is married to Pastor Foglas, has been an employee at the WISH house for many years.



and beans each day, and put together a party menu like nothing we had imagined.

When she received word of our plans, she rallied five other ladies, including the lady who cooks the rice

With over 160 children involved, it was decided to have two parties, one on Friday afternoon for the children in Pastor Foglas' school and one on Saturday morning for the younger children who are in the feeding program. The WISH youth center provided a secure and spacious location for games and feasting.



Marching two-by-two from the school to the youth center, the children came in their best party attire, although much of the clothing was torn and tattered or several sizes too large, with broken zippers and missing buttons.

They had a terrific time playing jump rope, Frisbee, and basketball while others split into groups and



played games of tag or sang as they marched in choreographed formation. It was a special treat for us when a group of children began singing, "We Wish You a



Merry Christmas” with perfect English pronunciation! Some of the smallest children played with tennis balls or just sat on the sidelines, taking it all in.

When Pastor Foglas gave the word that it was time to eat, the children all filed into a large room inside the youth center and gazed at the table filled with a variety of colorful foods displayed on platters before them; mountains of spaghetti, heaps of fried chicken, fried plantain, a rosy red potato salad made with beets, lettuce and tomato, and cabbage salad. But a party just wouldn't be complete without cake! Pat Larakers provided the sheet cakes that left their little faces and



fingers covered with frosting. Pastor Foglas dipped red and orange punch from buckets into stainless steel cups as each child waited patiently to be served.

The plastic plates and spoons we brought for the party became a treasured souvenir along with a plastic Nemo fish, sucker, stainless steel cup, and toothbrush (courtesy of Crest). To our amazement, some of the younger children saved the cake to take home and share with their family, while others even saved their used napkins. In addition to the Nemo fish, McDonald's contributed a ten-gallon drink cooler so the children will be able to receive a cold drink with their meal each day. Basketballs, jump ropes, Frisbees, and kites will stay with Pastor Foglas for the children to use under supervision.



Funds donated for the party were used to purchase the stainless steel cups in the local market so that every child will have their own cup to use each day with their beans and rice. It was important to purchase everything possible from the local market ladies to put more money into the island economy. All other items were donated by our Port Huron community. Excess funds will help to sustain the food program throughout the year and provide supplements to the beans and rice.

When we visited Wazelia's family at her home that evening, she told us that when her son, McKenzie, told her about his special day, she thought he was making up a story. It seemed too good to be true! Mission accomplished – for one day in February these children felt very special. *When Pastor Foglas blessed the food, he gave thanks for their very first party.*

We give thanks for Pastor Foglas and Cheritable who do so much every day to provide for the physical and spiritual well-being of this community, and for the Larakers who make it all possible through their service to the Lord. We are also very thankful for all the people in our Michigan community who opened their hearts and wallets to make this event happen.

We vowed that this was only the first of the parties yet to be for these very special children in this very special place.



Newsletters are available in color at www.haitiwish.org
Additional photos will appear soon on a new web site album link.

JOIN US
at the GRAND HAVEN COMMUNITY CENTER
421 Columbus Street April 22 at 5:30 PM
FOR THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Joe and Pat Larakers will share challenges and blessings of the past year and bring updates on WISH projects. Don't miss the photo presentations, a delicious variety of potluck food, and fellowship with others who share a heart for Haiti.

Invite your family, friends, and neighbors.

Bring your own table service and a dish to pass for the potluck dinner.

Evah Port Goes Home



Evah Port, loving and devoted wife of WISH President, Bob Port, was suddenly called home to the Lord on March 25. For more than two decades, Evah has been a constant source of support and encouragement for her husband's dedicated work with WISH. The WISH family draws closely together as we offer our prayers and deepest sympathy to Bob Port and his entire family.

Evah Port was a beautiful example of Christ's love to her children Robert Port, Jr. (Susan), Andrew Port Ellen) and Dale Port (Karen); A cherished grandmother

of Evan, Cameron, Austin, Drew, Katie, Owen and Caroline; loving sister of Lucy Hensman (Harry); and sister in law of William Port (Barbara). She was a wonderful friend to so many and she cared dearly for her family and friends. She was born in Detroit Michigan on Jan. 28, 1930. A memorial service was held at First Evangelical Free Church in St. Louis on March 30. Donations can be made in Evah's memory to Outreach Partners, First Evangelical Free Church, 1375 Carman Rd., Manchester, MO 63021.

The St. Louis work team, scheduled the end of February, had to reschedule their trip when the airline unexpectedly cancelled their flight. The team was scheduled to depart March 28 and has postponed their trip pending further arrangements.