



Editor's note: We offer two reports from different writers on conditions in Haiti.

It took an earthquake

By Carol Guthrie Heilman



On January 12 at 4:53 p.m., a 7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti, magnifying the long-time problems of an oppressed people.

Steve Revis was driving his van when the quake struck. “This huge tree up ahead started shaking, and not just a little,” says the missionary who, with wife Judy, has served in Haiti for 25 years. “It was like someone had grabbed the trunk and was violently shaking the top three or four feet back and forth. Then my van started shuddering and a power line dropped down on top of it. Fortunately, I was able to back up and get away. The next thing I saw, about a hundred feet ahead, the walls of a six-story cement block building collapsed and the floors fell one on top of another, reduced to a pile of rubble no higher than a dump truck. Most of the people caught inside were dead or soon died.”

When Steve stopped his van, he overheard two Haitian men. One had bowed his head to pray. The other asked if he was praying to a “job” (a demon). The praying man answered, “No, I’m praying to God. Only God can help us.”



As darkness fell, Steve thought of the spiritual darkness that had trapped many Haitians for centuries. Through documented historical accounts, he knew that African slaves had turned to demonic practices in hopes of freeing themselves from their French plantation masters in 1804. After the slaves’ successful rebellion, a group of voodoo priests held a dedication ceremony and swore Haiti’s allegiance to the devil for 200 years. Today, that ceremony is still reenacted beneath a maupo tree in Cape Haitian.

Even after those 200 years, the country’s then-president declared voodoo Haiti’s official religion. “Through deception and trickery, Satan got in on the ground level of this country and since that time, some Haitians continue to give him tribute,” Steve says.

Troubled by the struggles of third-world farmers, Steve had earned a masters degree in agriculture from Clemson University. With three young children in tow, he and Judy arrived in Haiti in 1983, ready to serve, though without sponsorship of a mission organization. Steve had told Judy, “A hungry or thirsty man needs to see and feel God’s love, not just hear about it. If the Lord wills, we’ll go.”

Steve began working with individual farmers, helping them with their crops and digging wells for irrigation. One day, some Haitian mothers pleaded with him to dig a well for clean drinking water. Their children were sick and dying from drinking polluted waters. Through the years, Steve has dug over 100 wells in Haiti, providing clean water for villages, schools, churches, hospitals, and mission compounds, as well as water for irrigating farmers’ fields.



Top: Stan Revis, left, joins other volunteers in searching rubble for survivors. Above: Dr. Lance Plyer, left, and Doug Ducker attend a young patient



Courtesy of Steve and Judy Revis

But all along, the Revises witnessed a political and spiritual oppression as real as the smell of open sewers in the sweltering heat. In response, the couple got involved in people's lives, showing them a compassionate God who gives love and hope.

Steve says that Haiti has a "penny economy" and that poor people have always fought to survive. They can't afford to buy a sack of rice or beans so they purchase only a handful of each plus a pinch of seasoning and enough charcoal to cook that meal. They usually have little or no electricity, no toilets, and scarce clean water. A woman may walk a mile or more to find water for her family, and even then, she might have to dip from a dirty stream or mud hole. Diseases run rampant. Many children acquire worms that grow long and fat in their stomachs or intestines.

There is scant law enforcement, no 911 emergency system, no EMS teams. Ambulances are rare, doctors have minimum medical supplies, and the roadways range from barely adequate to nearly impassable. Except for on-the-ground missionaries and humanitarian-aid workers, most of the world hadn't noticed the plight of the Haiti people.

Until that January afternoon.

As Steve Revis waded into the chaos of the earthquake's aftermath, Judy, temporarily in North Carolina caring for her elderly mother, coordinated supplies and work-teams

to support Steve's efforts. The first team to respond was mostly from Hendersonville, N.C. It included Rev. Mark Hunnicutt of Mud Creek Baptist Church, county commissioner Mark Williams, the Revises' son Jim, internist Lance Plyer, apple farmer and Judy's brother Marvin Lively, Doug Ducker of Mills River, and Stan Revis, Steve's brother from Alabama.

In Haiti, Steve and these men stopped one day to give medical aid to a witch doctor injured in the quake when his temple collapsed. The opportunity to witness to such a man is rare in Haiti, Steve says, and he didn't waste the chance. "You need to have Jesus Christ in your heart, not Satan," Steve told the man. Steve says that before the team left, this hardened old man accepted the Lord as his Savior. Steve was told of 101 such conversions in one week alone after the quake hit.

Marvin Lively says of his time in Haiti, "We saw voodoo dolls hanging up in the trees, but whether we were cleaning and bandaging wounds or handing out water, we also gave out Christian tracts and told the people about Jesus. God created the sun to come up in the mornings and the moon by night. He can certainly use this tragedy to bring us closer to Him. God is good."

Steve added, "In 45 seconds, God did more evangelizing on the island of Haiti than

all the missionaries and church leaders could do or have done if they had a hundred lifetimes."

Jerry Miel, a former missionary who served in Haiti as a radio engineer with World Team Mission, returned to help after the quake. He reported these observations on Feb. 17:

"Our Lord is on the move in a mighty way! Haiti's president called for three days of fasting and prayer instead of the normally scheduled Mardi Gras celebration. This is not only unprecedented, but truly a witness to His power. Remember, only six years ago a former Haitian president called the nation to come together to rededicate Haiti to Satan.

"That first morning (of the call to pray) we could not find one business or even a gas station open. There was no traffic and there were no people on the streets. Where was everyone? They had gathered in churches or makeshift meeting sites, in church yards or the tent cities to worship and pray. I did not see any practicing of voodoo, but only people turning to God. We saw the same scene repeated in every town and hamlet we passed through that day. Truly a revival is sweeping through the land."

Because Steve has witnessed refugees — truckloads and on foot — leaving Port-au-Prince, he believes that some of Haiti's biggest problems are yet to come. "It's


understandable that many people are afraid to return to what is left of their former dwellings; and many tent cities, meant to be temporary, have turned into slums. Hundreds and even thousands of acres are filled with refugees. The city is a smoldering disaster waiting to happen. Some



people are returning to their roots out in the countryside or in the northwest, but often there is nothing for them to return to. In one way, it's good if they can get out of the city, but conflicts are bound to happen. If the people don't have legal titles to a piece of land, they can't stay there or build houses or have wells dug. This is a huge problem and there are no easy answers."

After a few days' rest in Saluda, N.C., Steve will return to Titayen, Haiti, a few miles north of Port-au-Prince. He lives on a Global Mission compound along with other missionaries including workers with Samaritans' Purse. Judy longs to be in Haiti, working alongside her husband, but at this time she will stay behind to care for her mother and to organize more work teams.

One of Steve's first tasks will be to drill a well so that an orphanage can have clean drinking water. They were forced to relocate, moving 100 miles north, because their building had been destroyed in Port-au-Prince. Rodney Fitzsimmons, an American missionary in Haiti for many years, heard of their plight. He bought a piece of land and began building a new orphanage. "Rodney is using this opportunity to show Christ's love to these children and to everyone who will witness his actions," Steve says.

For all that the Haitian people will endure and suffer, Steve shares this insight: "We have an opportunity, like never before, to evangelize, to tell the people about Jesus because their hearts are open to hear. We can give them hope." 



Courtesy of Steve and Judy Revis

Steve and Judy Revis

You can contact Steve and Judy Revis at CAMS, P.O. Box 111, Hendersonville, NC, 28795, or at srevis@tds.net. To learn more about the Revises' work in Haiti, read *Just Go!*, a book by Joyce Barnett and Carol Heilman, available online at Buybooksontheweb.com.

Carol Guthrie Heilman is co-author of Just Go!, a book about missionaries in Haiti. She is a free-lance writer for magazines and newspapers and has taught creative writing. She and her husband live near Mt. Pisgah in N.C.



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The two faces of Haiti

By Mary Jean Baxley

The following is a series of glimpses into the rescue and recovery efforts this reporter found in Haiti.

I am a journalist who went to Haiti March 1, two months after its powerful earthquake. What I found were two different faces to the aftermath: the Haitian people and aid workers struggling to help each other against difficult obstacles, and the evil face of corruption, black market, sexual exploitation, and rampant abuses of those in need.

Mary Jean Baxley comforts a woman whose daughter died in the earthquake.



Southern Baptists have provided five medical teams, two assessment teams, one crisis intervention team, and two incident command teams. According to Cliff Satterwhite, SC Disaster Relief Director, 6,486 Buckets of Hope have been shipped as of March 18. These are large plastic containers that Baptist churches fill with food and personal items. Relief teams have also counted 418 professions of faith.

I also spent time with, and was deeply moved by, the volunteers of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent. One RCRC translator, Mackenson Belleuvre, rescued three women from a collapsed bank and later saved four male students from a school, though one died from lack of immediate medical care.

At one aid station, where victims waited patiently and orderly in line, 622 families, average size of five, received blankets, mosquito nets, tarps, sleeping mats, buckets, and personal hygiene kits.

As I worked my way over the island, I took notes on what I found. Several times, women would ask to write a name in my notebook. I asked why and was told they didn't know where their children's bodies were, and that my book would be a grave marker of sorts – so their names wouldn't be forgotten by the world.

Annelie Pierre Forestal wrote the names of her dead children, Stanley Forrestal and Annil Windmayer Forestal. Another mother wrote her son's name, Vincent Perralte Constant. Gina Cherivergenor cried for her lost baby girl. I will remember each of these children for I know what it's like to have lost a child. I asked the group of women if I could pray for them, and their hands reached out for me. They were silent as we lifted up their children's names to the Lord.

We should also remember an eight-year-old boy named Aile whose grandmother, Garthe Cardozo-Stefanson, wrote his name in my notebook. She owns the now-destroyed Hotel Montana in Petion Ville.

When I arrived there with my one-person tent, she invited me inside her gates and shared her hopes for rebuilding Haiti. "UN and U.S. government and



Quake victims are grateful for Red Cross provisions.



Top: Bodies of quake victims are still buried in this unstable building.
 Above: The Red Cross hastily erected such shelters.

other countries need to step in and stop the Haitian government from stealing aid relief meant for the people. Also, the people need to be educated so they will learn not to beg or need handouts from the NGO's. My people need to rely on themselves and on God and rebuild a strong country with a good leader who puts the people first."

Another person I met at Hotel Montana was Hector Mendez, better known worldwide as Chino from Mexico City. His group is called Los Topos (the moles). Their job is to burrow into the ruins of buildings to rescue people. I have a great respect for what rescue and recovery teams do. By the time I got to Haiti, rescue had become recovery of bodies. Seven were recovered at the hotel while I was there. Chino was proud of his team. They helped at the World Trade Center on 9-11 and after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. He had been interviewed by Anderson Cooper of CNN.

Samaritans Purse was on the ground with water sanitation systems and tents. SP worker Patty Hutton said, "I am helping in



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Grande Goave as lead of an eight person team . . . It will take lots of money and work to rebuild Haiti.”

Portlight Strategies, a non-profit organization which serves the disabled from its base in Charleston, arrived soon after the quake. “We will continue to do long-range planning for the 800,000 people with disabilities and new amputees all over Haiti who have been almost forgotten,” said the company’s founder, Paul Timmons. “We serve the specific needs of the underserved, unserved and forgotten. So far, we have provided two water-filtration systems, eleven 18-wheel containers of medical goods, solar panels.”

Amputees are also being served at the Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Des Chapelles. The founder’s son and grandson, Ian and Edward Rawson, will soon open the Haitian Amputee Coalition Prosthetic and Rehabilitation Center, where they expect to serve over 2,000 quake victims who lost limbs.

The Haitians are neighbors who need our help. I hope you’ll find a way to contribute to the massive undertaking of restoring lives in their country. 



Mary Jean Baxley is a free-lance journalist and volunteer with the American Red Cross and the S.C. Baptist Disaster Relief. She has worked with refugees from Burma, Kenya, Sudan, and Haiti. She lives in Columbia with her husband, Norman, and son, Burt.

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“ . . . For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Matthew 25:35-40



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