



Thank You to the Maggie Walker Community from Danny Yates

Thank you for all of your thoughts and prayers and for your support of my family while I was in Haiti. I returned very late Sunday evening, January 17, after eleven days in the country.

I was in Haiti as part of the St. Bridget/Cathedral Joint Haiti Committee. On this, my second trip to Haiti, I was using some of my MLWGS skills serving as interpreter/translator for a group of five as we visited a Haitian parish where our Joint Haiti Committee supports an elementary school, community feeding program, and small health clinic.

When the quake struck Tuesday evening I was in the town of Hinche, about 55 miles north of Port au Prince. This village was rocked but experienced little physical damage during the first quake and subsequent tremors. We became distressed and very concerned later as we learned the news, via radio, that Port au Prince was decimated.

On Friday, January 15, I went to Port au Prince to help bring some injured Haitian adults and children back to Hinche. Traveling in a standard Ford pickup truck, Pere Bordeau and Pere Etienne, (two priests from the Hinche community) and I were able to bring about 25 survivors to the relative safety of Hinche. This was an incredible day, full of shock, tears, fear, and, finally, relief at our success in this small effort.

On Saturday, through the incredible efforts of a Richmonder named Karen Mohlvan and the non profit Mission Aviation Fellowship/MAF operation, I was flown along with my group, on a small plane from Hinche to Cap Haitien. On Sunday we traveled, via commercial airlines, to Turks and Caicos, then to Miami, and at last to Richmond late that night. Pulling off this complicated evacuation in a time of such catastrophe was nothing short of miraculous, and I am eternally grateful to Ms. Mohlvan, MAF, and the Haitian messengers who made possible the communication of this evacuation plan.

My joy in returning home safely to my family, as you can well imagine, is overshadowed by my anguish for the immense loss and suffering of the Haitian people and for the ever increasing threats of starvation, illness, and chaos, which are not restricted to Port au Prince and starting to extend to the surrounding regions and villages.

The situation throughout the country is truly dismal and alarming. The city of Port au Prince is a shell of itself, virtually wiped out: the UN headquarters, Presidential Palace, and National Cathedral are all gone as are most homes, offices, and stores. Estimates of human loss and suffering, the 200,000+ casualties, innumerable wounded, and unaccounted for inhabitants, workers, and volunteers are staggering. Each day more survivors desperately cram onto buses and boats or attempt to walk incredible distances to flee the city in the hope of finding safety, shelter, food, and water.

The wretched living conditions and extreme poverty of Haiti's rural areas prior to last Tuesday's calamitous earthquake compound this crisis beyond belief. The surrounding villages and countryside have long lacked minimal resources (food, water, fuel, adequate shelter and transportation) to support their pre-quake populations: now they are facing unimaginable strain from the influx of refugees leaving Port au Prince and other areas in southern Haiti. This volatile situation could lead to a tragedy as great as the initial quake. Starvation, civil unrest, and mob violence are clear threats to these small and peaceful communities.

When I boarded the plane to leave Hinche on Sunday, Pere Bourdeau and his kindhearted parishioners, humble and hard-working people who had taken such good care of us, were convinced that they would not survive the coming onslaught. I am trying to raise awareness of this spreading risk and assist in raising funds for Father Bourdeau so that he can relieve suffering for the people in the village of Hinche. If you would like to help, or simply get more information, please take a look at the following website:

<http://hincherelief.wordpress.com>

Once again, I thank all of you in our extended Maggie Walker family, for your support.

Sincerely,

Danny Yates

Class of 2009

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Children in the Carissade school we visited in Hinche, Haiti, prior to the quake.



Four days after the 7.0 earthquake that decimated Port au Prince on 1/12/10, our MAF pilot examined the weight of our group's luggage before we boarded the small plane to leave the community of Hinche, 55 miles north of PAP.



Pictured left to right are: Pere (Father) Bourdeau who remains with his parishioners in Hinche, Brother Kosmos from our Richmond Haiti Committee, an additional passenger, our MAF pilot, and me.



A photo sent to me after I returned home, from Pere Bourdeau's assistant, of refugees arriving in Hinche after the quake.



Another photo sent by Bourdeau's assistant, of wounded refugees waiting outside of an overflowing Hinche hospital.



Some photos I took in Port au Prince on Friday 1/18/10



More photos I took in Port au Prince on Friday 1/18/10

