

Dr. Marvin Loyd's Story

Back around 1990, I had been hearing about people going on short term mission trips and I wanted to look into it. I met a retired Methodist missionary at our Annual Conference and talked to her about it and she told me who to contact, the Board of Global Ministries in New York. I wrote them but never received a response. The daughter of a friend of ours who farmed here and in north Louisiana went on a mission trip to the Philippines with a Methodist church in Louisiana and put on a program at our church upon returning. I expressed an interest about wanting to go with a group who had a dentist involved and the leader referred me to a retired Methodist minister in Jackson, Mississippi who was taking medical teams (with dentists) to Haiti. I contacted him and ended up going on several trips with his group, eventually forming a group of my own.

About that time we got a new Bishop, Bishop Wilke, who was interested in the Volunteers In Mission (VIM) program being started by the Methodist Church and started having a weekend meeting every year for people interested. The VIM program was started in response to so many independent Methodist groups doing short term mission projects of their own. My wife was active at that time on the Conference level and we became good friends with the Wilkes, and I "bent his ear" every chance I got about having these mission meetings. At the very first one we had, I met Jay Lawhon there with his team. They had an excellent exhibit set up and a program of what they were doing in Pignon. They were in the middle of the CMP program with Dr. Guy and did not need any help from the Methodist Church. I was going with this Mississippi group and really did not need the Church either. But the CMP project and what I was doing were promoted as examples of what was out there. I had actually met Jay some years before when he was active in a "Lay Witness" program going on in the Methodist Church at that time. He put on a program in Lake Village. As I got to know Jay and some of his people they started giving me a "hard time" about not joining with them. Finally, on an off time of the year, I agreed to go with them right after January 1, 1992. I flew into Port-au-Prince a few days ahead of them and stayed with my missionary there. I made a couple of trips out with some of their friends for the holidays. I had kept a set of surgical instruments at his house, so I got them and flew with them to Pignon.

There was a dental chair in the downstairs of the office/clinic building where records were stored and I ran the chair out the back door as far as I could go in order to get decent light and worked a couple of days that way. There was a missionary staying out near the farm I met and he said there were a lot of people out there needing extractions that could not easily get in to the hospital, so I agreed to go out to the farm and set up. I thought I would probably be out there maybe a half day but at noon there were still people coming so I said I would go back after lunch. Well, I worked until sunset and there were still people coming so I decided to go back again the next day, thinking I would finish up mid morning. There were still people there when I broke for lunch and I went back out there and the sun was just setting when I took care of the last patient, actually using my last carpoule of Novocain!!! That was the hardest two days I have ever worked in Haiti. I took out around 330 teeth!!!

After that experience I promised I would plan to return at some time. When I returned home I received a call from Dr. Larry Giffin, telling me he was going to Pignon that summer with a West Memphis team and asking for advice about how to set up. I told him about that big shade tree near the barn at the farm and that it would be a good place to set up. I gave him an instrument and supply list of things to take with him. I asked him to see if any teeth were growing under that tree! He came back all enthused, seeing a need for a regular dental clinic at the hospital. I saw him during the Christmas holidays when I visited at my daughter's in Marion and he told me what he was thinking about getting a dental clinic started. In January of 1993 he told me he had a wing of a building being built for a dental clinic and he was going back in February to see about it, and he invited me to join him. There was going to be some cabinet and inside work needing to be done and I had a retired builder who had made one mission trip previously with me. I told him what was going on and asked if he would be interested in going at the last minute and see what was needed. So this is what we did, I helped Larry put together some dental units he had shipped in and my builder took measurements and drew up plans for cabinet work. He made up a list of building

materials needed and got these delivered to the hospital. I think Jay or Dr. Guy's people bought them in Cap Haitian. My Sunday School Class paid for them and when our team went down there in June he built the cabinets while our medical team went to some of the outlying communities and held clinics. I met Dr. Petite for the first time and he joined us, with his dental clinic in the back of his truck. I was extracting teeth under the trees that time and the next time I was doing root canals and normal fillings; quite a change. I am proud to have been a part of how this has continued to progress. By the way, Don, who is head of the prosthesis project, was a young kid who helped my builder do the cabinet work, back in 1992, and was one of the first to receive training as a dental lab technician. Also, coincidentally, my builder friend had a missing leg, having lost it in an accident while a teenager.

I found out graduates of the dental school in Port-au-Prince, upon graduation, are required to serve a year of "social service", usually at a government hospital or clinic. Dr. Guy got the Pignon hospital approved for this and for a number of years there has been at least one newly graduated dentist assigned there. He/she just had to be furnished room and board and a small stipend. This new dentist got excellent experience working with modern dental equipment like we use in the United States. He/she was able to concentrate quite a bit on working on the local schoolchildren. It has been an excellent program for everyone. I brought the president of the Christian Dental Society over along with the president of the newly formed Christian Dental Lab Association and they helped start a dental lab training program. A lady also made a couple of trips who was head of a dental hygiene school and she worked with some of the technicians and dental assistants, training them how to clean teeth. We laid over in Port-au-Prince for a few days at the Methodist Guest House and visited some of the Methodist projects, as well as the dental school.

These are some of my thoughts I recall about the early days. Dr. Larry Giffin is the one who started the dental clinic and paid for constructing the building and purchasing the original dental equipment. He is really one who should be honored; as well as the excellent job Dr. Jim Birong has done in expanding the dental program. Again, I am proud to have had the opportunity to be a part of the early stages of things.

Because it became known by the Methodist Church's Board of Global Ministries of my involvement in such a successful health care program in Haiti, I was invited to serve on an advisory board for them. Some years ago, the Methodist Church accumulated reserve funds in their accounts. They decided to pull \$1,000,000 out and use it to upgrade 10 mission hospitals around the world in which they were involved, allocating \$100,000 to each of them. I was on a study group that had the job of deciding who and where these funds would go. I was specifically assigned to evaluate a hospital in Liberia, and went there with a team to see what their needs were. Our group returned to meet and report on our assigned hospitals. The team was made up of medical doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, and me a dentist. Since I was the only dentist in the group I wound up working on dental plans for ALL the hospitals. At our meetings something would be brought up as to what was needed at a hospital/clinic/program and I would comment we are already doing that in Pignon. I became embarrassed to keep commenting on how Dr. Guy was already doing that. I ultimately suggested the Pignon hospital and the CMP program be looked at as an example of how a mission health care program should be run. Ultimately, I periodically was able to line up Methodist people to visit with Dr. Guy and Pignon.

Because of some personal health issues I had to give up all these positions in 2004. Upon running into Sue Ishee in the Fall of 2009 I expressed an interest in going back to Pignon for a visit. She invited me to go with her to the January 2010 Board Meeting and you all know what happened with that. Two days before I was scheduled to leave for Haiti is when the earthquake hit. Afterwards, because of my past connections with Haiti and specifically with the Pignon Hospital and Dr. Guy, I was invited by the Methodist Board of Global Ministries and their United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), to meet in New York with representatives of all the groups in which the Methodist Church had a connection with programs in Haiti. Basically a damage report and assessment of their needs was given. Thankfully there was no damage report given about Pignon, but the needs were great as were the financial burdens. So the discussions about Pignon were how they could be integrated into the recovery plans. The biggest problem, besides financial, was the distance from Port-au-Prince to Pignon along with the transportation. I did not have to educate the group about Dr. Guy and Pignon as his reputation was well known. I was asked to serve on an evaluation team to make a visit to Haiti and make recommendations as to what

some of the needs were, ones in which UMCOR might be able to play a part. Pignon was automatically put on the itinerary without me having to recommend it. Ultimately, I took the team for an overnight visit to Pignon and some very good meetings with Dr. Guy. It was not necessary for me to "sell Pignon" to the group as Dr. Guy and the hospital sold themselves. Consequently this opened the door for the Hopital de Bienfaisance de Pignon to receive several grants to cover expenses for some of the unreimbursed health care given in the earthquake aftermath as well as for starting new badly needed projects/programs. It was a real honor for me to be able to represent Dr. Theodore/Promise For Haiti/Hopital de Bienfaisance de Pignon in this tragedy that befell my beloved Haiti.

On my recent return to Pignon I was amazed at what has taken place, primarily concerning the streets and electricity, and what I hear about the roadwork coming out of Port-au-Prince. Of course, I am amazed by what is continuing to happen in the hospital complex.

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