

Tradition: We returned to SaP December 27th to allow time to prepare for the S. Dakota team and discovered people thrilled that we chose to be with them on the most important day of the year.

Traditionally, January 1st, Haitians give thanks they have not died and look forward to more "days". They eat gallons of pumpkin soup and families gather as work is set aside. They call on friends with special greetings. Today, a stream of folks came to us with a brief kiss on the cheek and "a look" that warms the heart.

Months ago we made a donation toward the organization of an annual football (soccer) tournament for 9 communities. We then sponsored the SAP team and last evening took our "VIP" passes to Port a Bonheur for tournament play.

Dark when we arrived we were startled as the generator lighted a small chalked field on the beach with barriers all around and even bleachers of Haitian design on one side. Goals were 2ft by 2ft and we were greatly entertained by fancy footwork, serious play and SAP winning with one goal. Announcers with large speakers did play by play, announcing the responses of Pastor Shirley and Father Beneche to their team's play. He opened the tournament with prayer and I have been asked to close the "federation tourney" on Jan 6th and look forward to watching the last games.

It was a special New Years Eve for us. Walking in the dark we were greeted by name from fields and dimly lite farm homes. In PaB we were guided by an old barefooted man over the large stones to the beach. The "stadium" was just being set when the "blans" arrived on time and very early. We had time to visit with people we met during food distribution and a translator was called to "rescue" us. Following the games we were taken to a boat that had been sent for us from SAP. It was 11 pm! They seem to think we will turn into pumpkins if not tended and protected just so.

A miracle began as we rowed away from shore. The sky was filled with a gazillion stars and the Milky Way reflected on the crystal sea. It was impossible to identify the horizon with the illusion of sky above and beneath us. Other boats joined us in the darkness and the game was discussed, our opinion solicited and our Kreyòl coached with warm teasing. It was a New Year night to remember as I ended it at church with those who came to pray in the Bon Ane, and share the beginning of new hope and new life.

By God's amazing grace we are offered hope for change of attitude, and transformation of perspectives. All God asks is faithfulness to Godly justice, goodness and love of God and all God's children. Blessings of a year spent doing unimaginable things without fear all blended last evening. I was filled with radical gratitude for life, and love, and adventure, and constant transformation.

This morning we met with a desperate water committee; recalled errors of the past; discussed critical needs of the present; and, planned for the future. We said good words to one another, held hands and prayed. Thanks be to God, in Haiti it is not unmanly to weep a bit and hug old ladies.

Shirley, La Gonave, January 1st, 2009. Bon ane...Happy New Year... Looking at the stars.