

**It has been far too long since my last newsletter.**

Please consider the following good news articles as an explanation rather than an excuse for my delay in writing. A quick note to all who are new to this newsletter: Whenever you see a pronoun like I, me, or my; they all refer to me, Lavern Halstead. I try to write in a conversational form as if we (you and I) are communicating face-to-face.

**The good news is:** In the past eight months two Christianity classes have been taught by Teresa Murphy and the results have been fantastic. In the past nine years a lot of planting and cultivating has been done, but now the harvest time has come. **Forty-five people, mostly teenagers, have been disciplined and baptized according to scripture.**



*All those dressed in white came to be buried with their Lord, to have their sins forgiven and to have their names added to the Book of Life.*

**FarSight**  
Christian Mission

Lavern & Cindy Halstead

741 Willow Grove Terrace

Davie, FL 33325-6392

954-236-8405

email: [Farsight@bellsouth.net](mailto:Farsight@bellsouth.net)

web: [www.farsightchristianmission.org](http://www.farsightchristianmission.org)

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**The good news is:** The sight in my right eye is better than ever. In December, while leading a team in Haiti, I experienced a detaching retina. Bubbles of distortion and blackness began creeping across my right eye, blocking my vision. We implemented our evacuation plan, which worked perfectly, to get me back to the U.S. as quickly as possible. I arrived home on New Year's Eve. Cindy had found a retinal specialist willing to see me that evening. After examining my eye and confirming that it was a detaching retina, he told me to go home and lie as still as possible until Monday, (Jan. 3) when he would do surgery on my eye. He called and checked on me Saturday and Sunday. After the surgery on Monday, I was to go home and remain "dormant" for a month. My sight gradually came back as the gas placed inside my eyeball was replaced by fluid. Dr. Halperin was an immeasurable blessing and the wonders of modern medicine available to us in America are priceless.

**The good news is:** I should not have to worry about prostate cancer for the rest of my life. Last October, I was diagnosed with early-stage prostate cancer. This is the same cancer that killed my dad. After a brief but extensive review of my options, I chose to have a laproscopic radical prostatectomy (LRP). In simple English, I had my prostate removed on February 1. I came home the next day but once again under doctor's orders, **"NO bending, lifting, pushing, or pulling"**. (continued on page 2)

continued from page 1:

Dr. Arnon Krongrad is a pioneer and leader in LRP. I personally think he is the best.

My post-op prognosis and follow-up testing all indicate that I am currently cancer-free. My doctor gave me a set of pictures taken by the robotic camera but my wife won't let me put them in the newsletter.

Wives, do you know your husband's PSA? Men, if you are over 40, go get tested.

**The good news is:** Cindy does not have a blocked artery. All the time I was going through my health complications, Cindy was experiencing some of her own. The stress of my problems definitely added to hers. After Cindy failed a stress test, her doctors were reasonably sure they would find a blocked artery when they performed an angiogram. They found nothing. The doctor was so surprised that he admitted to taking twice the normal number of pictures and extending the scan far beyond normal parameters, looking for blockages. Arterial spasm was the final diagnosis; a condition that she is attempting to manage with medication and exercise. Please keep Cindy in your prayers as she and the doctors continue to seek better solutions for this condition.

**And now, some catchup news.** There is so much to report on since the last newsletter. It will take several newsletters to get completely caught up. Jeff and Caitlyn Crawford, brother and sister, along with Joyce and Desmond Stallworth, mother and son, Amy Douglas, Jason Logue, and Heather Siebenthal went to Haiti with Danny, Leann and myself in December. Jeff and Caitlyn had been to Haiti on trips with Bob Keesee and the "Raincatchers" teams. This time they wanted a medical intern experience. They had a great 3 weeks. This was our week to wrap up 2004 and launch 2005. Danny and Leann were beginning their fulltime commitment and the rest of us were there to bring Christmas to the kids. For Heather, this was her 15th+. week on the mountain. She just completed another two weeks in August.



Jeff



Heather



Desmond



Joyce



Amy



Jason



Caitlyn

**In January** Norm Anderson & Harold Jerde led a team for me. (Remember, I was recovering from one surgery and planning for the next.) From left to right in the group picture: Bobbi Denslow, Norm, Teresa, Jeff, Chelsea Britton, Bob Erickson, Gerald Kuser, Caitlyn, Harold, Danny & Leann. Skill and experience take time to develop. This team, though young at heart, brought with them a diverse skill set. They built desks, shelves, and repaired bicycles. They passed out 1000 pair of socks to the school children. They worked on the new apartment. And they still had time and energy to play with the children. Their age did earn them one luxury; a 20-minute plane ride from Port Au Prince to Jacmel replacing the 4-hour truck ride. Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) provides this passenger and cargo flight service primarily for missionaries throughout Haiti. The price is the same for one or five to fly so Norm opted to reserve the plane for the return trip as well.



Gerald

I don't think I know anyone kinder, gentler, softer spoken, or more generous than Norm Anderson. It is an honor to share in this work with him and to call him "brother".



Norm





**February** in a Michigan farm community like Cass City provides a little downtime and an opportunity for a short-term mission trip for this team from the Novesta Church of Christ. (Standing) Bob Cotton and Ked Miller. (Sitting) Leann with Gilbert Kern, Beverly Auten, and Meleah Auten. Below, Meleah is welding one of the 50 desks that the team built that week. They also built a dozen new pews for the church and then finished out their week working on the new apartment.



**In March** we had two teams. First, Chuck Curry, Tammy Worcester, Patti Forthman. Tammy and Patti were on spring break and both have several prior weeks of experience with FCM. Chuck is from Wisconsin and met Teresa on one of her speaking engagements. One of many projects they worked on was the beautiful mural designed by Tammy. Tammy and her brother, Chris, have been very active in collecting socks, toothpaste and toothbrushes for the mission.



**Minutemen** (and Women) The second March team was made up in part with some of my closest brothers in Christ. Dave Elliot, Reuben Nichols, Steve Handley, and Craig Leslie have numerous times put their lives on hold to come to the aid of the mission. This time they were able to bring wives and friends. Pictured at right are: (standing r to l) Steve & Cindylee Handley, Evelyn and Dave Elliott, Teresa, Darlene Paasonen, Kristina Folson, Craig, Reuben, and James Dotson. Seated are Leann and Chelsea. Cabinet building, electrical wiring, welding, painting, cooking, and sewing - this team did it all.



As you read this, please pause for a second or two and pray for Reuben. He has just undergone extensive disc surgery and the doctors have told him to never lift anything heavy again. A thyroid biopsy just came back negative but he still must undergo surgery to remove the questionable lumps in his neck.

Getting there is half the fun. I always say, "if you survive the trip up the mountain then the rest of the week will be easy." Getting to know some of the people we are there to help is a priceless treasure that each team member gets to keep in his/her heart for a lifetime.





**PECHE PO JEZI - FISH FOR JESUS**, a VBS program, filled three weeks of July with games, Bible lessons, puppet shows, music, and food. About 500 children, divided into three age-groups, took part in the VBS. Helping to make this possible were teams from Virginia, Ohio, and North Carolina. (More on these volunteers in the next newsletter). There were also four highschool students from Jacmel who came to help with translation and Pastor Renaud (pictured with Dan Reese) spent the month preaching on Sundays and leading Bible lessons for the children during the week. Joe Ballard is accompanying one of the puppet songleaders.



I am looking forward to being able to look back on this year and see that God was constantly and completely in control. Many times in the past nine years I have looked ahead and saw only thick fog. Believing the path lay somewhere in the fog I, have taken those steps of faith when I could not see; trusting that God would guide and that eventually the course would be made clear. Each time I have grown by these experiences and have learned much. I know that faith in God and His ability to guide me is more valuable and more reliable than my own eyesight. I know that God is equally present in the sunlight and the fog; my inability to see does not in any way affect His ability to lead.

The past few months have been very foggy. For a multitude of reasons the FCM Board of Directors has asked Danny and Leann to discontinue their mission/missionary relationship with FCM. From the beginning, it has been the goal of FCM to help people learn to help themselves. Adding missionaries to the Seguin program was a move in the wrong direction. There are qualified and trustworthy Haitian men and women ready, willing, and able to step up into a leadership position. I think our situation this year was similar to that of many growing churches. A newly planted church makes a promise to itself that when it reaches a certain growth goal it will plant a new church. When the goal is reached rather than fulfill its promise, it sets a new goal so it can become even bigger. For some reason we tend to think that bigger is better, rather than fulfilling the commission to GO into all the world. . . This is not new, it goes all the way back to the Tower of Babel.

FCM is back on course now. We will be focusing on the school program for over 450 children this year. We were able to downsize by not adding any new students at the lowest level and then by graduating 25 from sixth grade. In Haiti, they have a pre-kindergarten and then kindergarten classes. I told Chrisnet that we were not equipped to manage a day-care, and after a year of 40 children ages 3-4, he agreed.

Seven of our graduates are going on to highschool and FCM will be assisting those young people in their continuing education. Another focus will be going back to a promise we had made to ourselves when FCM began, and that is to GO where we are invited and take the GOSPEL to all who want to hear it. Originally, I had naively thought that I could build ten churches in ten years. Here we are in our ninth year and we have two churches in Haiti, one in Costa Rica (more on this in the next newsletter), one in Mexico, and one in Alaska. We only met half of our goal. So, here is the plan:

1. Improve upon and focus on the school program in Seguin.
2. Start a new work in Bilot (near Kenscoff, Haiti).
3. Continue our assistance with the Costa Rica project.
4. (This one might be impossible) Take a little time off to let my body recover. I was supposed to be relaxing and enjoying some stress-free time in order to recover properly from the cancer surgery. I've yet to have the relaxed, stress-free time and therefore have not completely recovered from that surgery.

Adding to that, I was just hospitalized in September for atrial fibrillation, a rapid irregular heartbeat. It was this stress-related heart condition that caused me to leave corporate life nine years ago and begin FCM. My doctor indicated that this was probably not life threatening, but could cause a stroke. ***"Hey doc, I'm a Christian, guess which condition I fear the most?"***

Finally, today (9-19-05) I go for an MRI on my right shoulder to see if I have a torn rotator cuff. I have all the symptoms. Those open truck rides up the mountain are rough. Before I will concede that I am getting old, I am placing my body into the capable hands of the Urologists, Orthopedic surgeons and Cardiologists at Cleveland Clinic to see if they can make me eighteen again.

I almost forgot, I also need to reshingle my roof, thanks to Katrina. ***As always, if you find FCM's work worthy of your support, it is greatly appreciated and will be spent prudently.***

***To get updates and newsletters via email please send me a note at [farsight@bellsouth.net](mailto:farsight@bellsouth.net).***

***Another newsletter is coming soon! I promise!***