

# 2006: Another Long Year...

Dear Family and Friends,

Happy MLK Day, and greetings from Haiti! 2006 has come and gone, moving much too fast for us. It was a wonderful year, full of travel and adventure, but with some melancholy moments.

In early May, right after Andy's classes, and Kpandja's graduation from NKU, Andy, Thad, and Anna went to Togo to visit our African family, which was a blast. We were sorry that Tchapo didn't get to go, but he was busy with work. In addition to visiting family, we supervised the construction of a four-hole latrine in a market in the town of Kabou, north of Bassar (Anna's home). This was a gift from the people of First Presbyterian Church, Ft. Thomas, KY, as well as from some Long family members. We are so grateful for our friends' and family members' contributions help people of the third world.

A month long stay went by too quickly, and we returned to KY only to head off a few days later for Koinonia Farms, outside of Americus, Georgia: it was the fifth mission trip for Andy, and our church's first excursion to Koinonia, where we painted, worked on a house that required repairs, picked berries, and did a few odd jobs around the place. Koinonia is the birthplace of Habitat for Humanity, and well worth a visit. Clarence Jordan started it, back in the 50s, as a "Demonstration Plot for the Kingdom of God"; interestingly enough, a biracial community didn't go over too well in that part of the South at that time, and there is a lot of history (much bad) behind the place. Andy's parents took the family down there in the 70s, and Andy had always wanted to go back; it was a great chance, and the mission trippers included his mom and brother Steve. Lots of fun, and fellowship.

Andy had some extra trips this past year, to San Antonio for the math meetings, and a wonderful trek down into the Grand Canyon over Spring Break with his friend Jim Cushing. He also took up "kayabiking" with his brother Steve, and has hopes of doing a lot more of that in the future (kayaking and biking, although not at the same time!).

After a week home from Georgia, it was off to the Cline family reunion in St. Louis, Missouri, which was centered on the wedding of Alicia Gammon. The always-fun gathering was bittersweet this year, as beloved Uncle Jack Gammon was in the hospital, after a car accident. Not long after the reunion, we were obliged to return to St. Louis for Jack's funeral. We will miss Jack, his smiling face, his sweet disposition, his stories, and his southern charm.

Since we can't get enough of traveling, Andy started his sabbatical leave from NKU in August, along with Anna and Thaddeus, in Ranquitte, Haiti for the school year. Anna quit her job (they wouldn't grant her a leave), but we imagine they'll take her back when we return to Ft. Thomas. Life is good in Ranquitte, with Thad at the pre-school and enjoying free reign in a campus of six acres; Anna at the clinic, gardening, and joining in the activities about the house; and Andy interested in many projects focused on the environment, such as public sanitation, water treatment, solar cooking and dehydration, moringa trees, etc. He's loving it, and is feeling relaxed and rested (a contrast from life during the typical school year!).



Tchapo just turned 21 (Dec. 24th) -- yikes! He has been at NKU studying nursing, but appears to have lost interest: we hope that he will soon come to a conclusion about what he would like to focus on in life. We left him in August, and miss him dearly; but with grandma, uncles, aunts, and cousins about, he is well looked after in our absence. He's still working part-time at an assisted living facility in Ft. Thomas.

Kpandja graduated from NKU with a degree in biology in May, and prospects for graduate school in public health looked grim (due entirely to financing: he was accepted to Tulane, and to the University of Michigan). So he took a lab job at "Wild Flavors" for a couple of months, and decided to bide his time (he had a year left on his visa to work), planning for applications to traditional programs in biology. Then a near-miracle occurred, and the University of Cincinnati offered an unprecedented assistantship (due to his abilities, of course, but also due to some behind the scenes shenanigans by friends and supporters of Kpandja). He's through the first quarter and is currently studying the folks of the Fernald nuclear facility -- so he's already doing some public good in return for his education. We hope, of course, that he will one day return to Togo, to Africa, or somewhere else where the need is great for public health officials, and make a difference in this world.



Thad is five now, and a real trooper. We've put him through a lot this year, and he's still on his feet and going non-stop. We worried that we might have trouble in Haiti, because of the dramatically different culture, but we needn't have worried: he's doing great. He's easily the most fluent of the three of us in Creole (his school is in Creole), and he's got lots of friends. He ranges around the place like he owns it, grilling corn, gnawing on sugar cane, getting really dirty, and playing very hard. Unfortunately for his nervous dad, he's started climbing trees, ladders, etc.

Anna has adjusted easily to the Haitian culture, given its similarity to Togo. She works in the clinic whenever they need her (e.g. they get busy), especially when teams come from CFI who have medical work to do (just recently a lot of nasty student ears got cleaned). At the moment she's filling in for a nurse who's gone to the States.

Anna gets tired of seeing those with typhoid, those with malaria, those with both, and those with worms. Someone needs to do something about the public health down here! Sanitation is the number one problem (well, after an exploding population): if people only had clean water, and better hygiene, we'd avoid a lot of these problems. Let's work on that in 2007.

We hope that all of you will have a great 2007, and that we'll get a chance to visit this year. Our most joyful times are being with family and friends, sharing life's pleasures and even life's struggles.