

*the* H●OUSE  
*of* LIFE

BY SHELLEY BRIGGS CALLAHAN



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*for Dick and Barb, of course.*

MAP

Bondye di ou:  
Fè pa ou,  
M'a fè Pa M'

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“God says to you, you do  
your part, I will do mine.”

HAITIAN PROVERB

## INTRODUCTION

Not long after I started recording interviews with Dick and Barb, I knew having enough material to write a book would not be difficult. Between the two, they had an abundance of stories about how they came to build a clinic in Haiti. I told them, without a doubt, the book would write itself. Deciding why I wanted to tell their story was the more difficult part.

This book is about the lives of Dick and Barb Hammond and their work in Haiti for over thirty years. It is a story about their love for the Haitian people. It is about one couple's dedication to helping in a country where the need is great, and change is slow. It is a story about determination, passion, and hope. I knew I wanted to share their story, but I also wanted to be clear about why it was important to tell.

I wanted to give people a reason to believe in Haiti, its people, and its future. I wanted to show how Dick and Barb's path led them to build a clinic in a foreign country—not to present them as having done everything right (for they know that is not the case), but to show how they have always tried to do the most good through persistence, trust, and faith. I wanted people to see that many aid organizations have long, deeply rooted pasts in the countries where they work. Not all organizations only work for a few years and then disappear, leaving behind questions of how money was spent or if anyone actually benefitted—many organizations have worked in Haiti for decades, well before the 2010 earthquake. The founders of these organizations—people like Dick and Barb—have long histories in the country. They have built their homes in Haiti and dedicated their time to helping the Haitian people. These organizations, both small and

large, are not leaving—they were there before the earthquake, they stayed after the earthquake, and they will be in Haiti long after their founders are gone.

There are estimated to be between four thousand and ten thousand NGOs currently in Haiti, and each has its own story of how it came to work with the Haitian people. Although they began working in Haiti at different times, these organizations are all there for a reason, and a similar one—to provide for those in need. Why is Dick and Barb's story special, and why does it deserve to be heard? What makes them unique? The answer is simple: their story is special because Dick and Barb are so normal. They are compassionate people who are driven to help others, and nothing much else sets them apart from anyone. They have accomplished a great deal in life, while still remaining personable and modest. They don't claim to know everything or have all the answers. So much of what they have done they have figured out on their own with a great many challenges and obstacles along the way.

Dick and Barb chose to work in a country where it sometimes seems as though change will never come, and that has been so daunting that, at times, they have wanted to leave for good. They have witnessed many tragic circumstances that caused heartbreak day in and day out, yet they still returned, assuring the Haitian people that they were reliable, because there is little to rely on in Haiti. Dick and Barb have never given up hope in their work, because everything they have done has been about giving hope to the Haitian people.

The Hammonds have never received a dime for their efforts. Their dedication and love for the people of Haiti comes from a desire to help those in need, not for monetary gain or for recognition. In many ways, this has kept their organization from

growing, and, at times, (including today) it has made the future of the clinic uncertain. Dick and Barb ask for very little, yet give so much in life. They have built their home in Haiti, and they have opened their doors to thousands upon thousands of people to come inside without hesitation, judgment, or obligation. They are a couple that love each other immensely, as well as those around them. They did their best to tell these stories as accurately as they could—they apologize for any inaccuracies, which are solely due to a lapse in memory because of the passage of time. I am honored to have gotten to spend so much time hearing about their extraordinary lives.

-Shelley Briggs Callahan  
May 2016



## *en*

*Today was a good day. We saw lots of patients, many of whom were getting better. The most remarkable patient I saw was a woman with diabetes and hypertension. I told my interpreter, Yougains, that her blood sugar was out of control, and her blood pressure was even higher. Although the patient did not speak English, she understood that I was concerned for her, and she started to cry. She was sitting on a short bench, so I moved her bag over, sat down, and put my arm around her.*

*We talked for a while, and she told me that she had run out of her medications, including those for diabetes. She had gone to the pharmacy in town, but they wanted too much money for the medicine. After listening to her, I worked to get her back on a treatment plan. Afterwards, she said that if it were not for the clinic, she would be dead. What this particular patient said is in fact correct—so many patients would not ever be treated if it were not for the clinic, and they would never receive medication.*

*This woman made the whole trip to Haiti worthwhile. The clinic is about the patients, and we are making a big difference.*

*By the way, the Haitians call this place “The House of Life.”*

-Bill, MD

September 2014

Just the day before, Dick and Barb Hammond had been at the Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince having lunch. As usual, Boyer, a Haitian man who worked for Dick, had driven in from Jacmel to pick them up from the Toussaint Louverture International Airport. Along with Dick and Barb on the trip was their longtime friend Larry, who they knew from back home. After their plane landed and they retrieved their bags, they met Boyer outside the airport. They loaded their luggage into the back of the pick-up truck and headed to the hotel to eat, and relax, before driving to the clinic near Jacmel, a few hours south of Port-au-Prince.

The Hotel Montana is a well-known landmark in Pétienville, a suburb of Port-au-Prince. Located in the rolling hills of the city, the hotel is famous for hosting journalists and reporters from around the world, offering a stunning panoramic view of the city from the pool terrace. Dick and Barb had often met interesting travelers at the Hotel Montana—aid workers, contractors, vacationers. Once, they met a few men who had flown to Haiti to search for gold. They regularly made stops to dine or stay the night at the hotel as they traveled in and out of Port-au-Prince, sometimes as many as eight times a year.

After lunch, they headed to the Caribbean Market, a local grocery store that, with its aisles of packaged food and refrigerated items, was much more typical of an American supermarket than most stores in Haiti. Barb dove into her shopping list, having meticulously planned out meals for the upcoming weeks—the visiting medical team, consisting of upwards of twenty-five people, would be arriving at the clinic soon, and getting all the necessary items took a great deal of preparation. Since the Caribbean Market offered more options than the smaller markets near the clinic, it was important for Barb to get everything she needed while they were in Port-au-

Prince—the drive from Jacmel to Port-au-Prince took anywhere from three to five hours depending on traffic, and there would not be time to make the trip back for missing supplies. After the shopping was done, the group loaded the groceries into the back of the truck and headed out of the capital towards Jacmel. The clinic, Dick and Barb’s second home, awaited, empty since the last time they were in Haiti.

The next day, Tuesday, January 12, 2010, at 16:53 local time, both the Hotel Montana and the Caribbean Market would collapse, completely devastated by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that would rattle the country, the epicenter only twenty-five kilometers west of Port-au-Prince.

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When the earthquake struck, Dick and Barb were standing in the grass behind the clinic visiting with Diolene, a young Haitian woman who worked in the clinic pharmacy. Diolene was one of the clinic workers Dick and Barb saw with regularity—most of the others they saw only when the clinic was operating. When Dick and Barb were in Haiti, Diolene usually came by on Sundays to accompany them to church. When the clinic was in session, she worked each day in the pharmacy to help the volunteer medical team seeing Haitian patients. On this particular Monday, Diolene had come by to welcome the Hammonds back. She had not seen them since the last clinic, the previous November, and with eight weeks in between clinics, she was anxious to greet them. Like many of the Haitian staff, Diolene was close to the couple, affectionately referring to them as “Mom” and “Dad.”

As they stood chatting, Dick and Barb talked about their plans to stay at the clinic until March. It would be a shorter trip for them, lasting only about two months—even in their early

seventies, it wasn’t unusual for Dick and Barb to spend more than half the year in Haiti.

Without warning, the ground began to shake.

“What’s happening?” Barb screamed.

“It’s an earthquake!” Dick yelled back.

Barb and Diolene grabbed onto Dick to keep from falling. As they tried to remain standing on unbalanced ground, Barb watched as the cement pillars of the clinic swayed, something she knew was not supposed to happen. For thirty seconds—thirty very long seconds—they stood as still as possible, holding onto one another, waiting for the earth to calm.

The only person inside the clinic at the time of the earthquake was Larry. He had just turned off the clinic’s computer, located on the top floor of the building, and was walking down the stairs, when he paused on the landing between the second and third floor. There on the landing, he heard a noise that sounded like a train on the roof. He rushed down the stairs to the kitchen and saw the cupboard doors opening and closing. Dried goods and dishes were falling out, crashing to the floor. He looked back up the stairs and saw the computer tumble off the desk, landing right next to where he had just been seated. It was then that he realized what he was experiencing was an earthquake, and the train sound was the earth grinding against itself. Larry ran down the stairs and stood in a doorway between the kitchen and the men’s dorm-style bedroom.

As soon as the ground quieted, Dick looked up toward the three-story clinic.

“Larry, where are you? Are you OK?” he yelled.

“Yeah, Dick, I’m fine,” Larry shouted down from the kitchen.

Larry hurried down the stairs and outside to where Dick, Barb, and Diolene were standing. He told them the computer had broken to pieces and the kitchen was a mess. Otherwise, he was uninjured, and, as far as he could tell, not much other damage had been sustained inside the clinic.

From where they were standing, they couldn’t tell how much harm had been done to the structure of the building—the clinic, however, had not collapsed, and that was relieving. But it wasn’t the clinic Dick was worried about. He didn’t know the magnitude of the earthquake at that moment, but he knew it had to have caused considerable destruction. The only thing he could think about was how fragile the lives of Haitians were already without a natural disaster occurring.

Dick, Barb, and Larry walked around the side of the clinic to the driveway, surveying the damage. Just as they turned the corner, they saw Boyer flying through the gate, the truck bouncing down the rocky, uneven path. He was on his way back to the clinic when the earthquake struck. He had been visiting his friend, Big Louie, who lived a short distance down the road. The group waved at Boyer so he could see they were outside and safe. When he stopped the truck just short of Dick and Barb, his eyes were as big as saucers. He didn’t know if the clinic would be standing, or if anyone had been inside, and he was obviously shaken.

For a few minutes, they all stood together and tried to calm down. Once ready to focus, Boyer and Dick began circling the building, checking out the foundation and the walls of the clinic. To their relief, they found that damages outside the clinic were minimal—they saw a number of hairline cracks, but the

building itself was intact. Dick and Barb were incredibly grateful. They were fortunate to have built a structure strong enough to withstand such a massive quake. But, they were about to find out just how catastrophic the earthquake had been—not far from the clinic property, Jacmel was devastated.

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When his house started shaking, Dr. Frantzso Nelson did not know what was happening. He had never experienced an earthquake before. For years after, what he would remember most would be the noise, not just of the earthquake itself, but the sounds coming from the street after the ground stopped shaking—the cries and screams that rang out in every direction.

Dr. Nelson, who simply goes by Nelson to those who know him, is a Haitian doctor who has known Dick and Barb since 2007. The surgical and medical liaison for the clinic, he also has his own medical practice at the Dr. Martinez Hospital in Jacmel. At the time of the earthquake, he was nearing the completion of a two-story home in town that had been under construction for a few years. He, his wife, Anne, and their daughter, Caedelina, were on the second floor of the house during the quake. Anne was pregnant at the time.

When the earthquake ended, and the house stopped shaking and creaking, Nelson and his family crept downstairs and walked out onto the street. All around their home, other houses and buildings had collapsed into rubble—dust clouds fogged their view. Although Nelson and his family were unharmed, as he looked around, he saw people everywhere in the road bleeding, covered in concrete powder. He knew he needed to get to the hospital as soon as possible—there he would have medical supplies to help the injured. A neighbor close by offered to take

care of Nelson's wife and their daughter. Knowing his family was in good hands, he hurried towards the Dr. Martinez Hospital on foot.

By the time Nelson arrived shortly after, dozens of people had already gathered outside the hospital, many of them in desperate need of medical attention. Several of them were praying and calling out to God. The bodies of those who had managed to walk to the hospital, only to die in front of the hospital's doors, lay in the street.

From outside, Nelson could tell the building was not badly damaged—he could see a few cracks along the walls and some concrete blocks that had broken off, but it appeared safe to enter. He hurried inside and started the hospital's small generator, restoring the electricity he would need to care for patients. He then began bringing in people one by one. Not too long after Nelson started treating the wounded, Dr. Martinez, the owner of the hospital, appeared with two other physicians. The four doctors worked as fast as they could to help those who had lost limbs, those with head wounds, and those who were bleeding profusely. The number of people in need far exceeded their resources and the space available in the hospital, but they continued to work tirelessly, desperately trying to save lives.

They did not stop working until the following morning at 5:00, when the generator ran out of gas. They could no longer power the hospital's equipment, and their medical supplies were depleted. They had no choice but to say “no more.” Nelson would remain haunted by the memory of people dying inside the operating room, waiting for blood transfusions that the hospital was unable to provide.

Exhausted, Nelson returned home to check on his wife and daughter and to see the condition of his house. He had left in

such a hurry the day before, he was not entirely sure how much damage had been caused. When he arrived, he found his new home in shambles, having collapsed on itself in the aftershocks of the earthquake.

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Nelson slept in a courtyard outside of his house that evening, as Anne and Caedelina continued to stay with a neighbor. The next night, after working all day at the hospital, he slept outside again, along with thousands of other Haitians in Jacmel whose homes had been destroyed. A few days later, aid organizations started to arrive in town and hand out tents. Tent communities began popping up everywhere, and they were expansive—well beyond the number of people who had lost their homes. Many of the Haitians who had houses to return to still preferred to stay in tents because they were terrified of another earthquake. For years to come, many people in Haiti wouldn't feel comfortable sleeping inside.

The first night Nelson tried to sleep in his tent, he restlessly tossed and turned, as aftershocks continued to shake Jacmel. But the aftershocks weren't what kept him awake. He was worried about his daughter and wife, and their unborn child. He laid there questioning how he was going to keep them safe among all the wreckage and chaos in Jacmel. Nelson knew he had to keep working in the hospital every day, all day long—too many Haitians were in need of a doctor.

Fortunately, he didn't have to wait long for an answer. Within a few days, as more and more aid organizations moved into Jacmel, a representative from the French Embassy in Haiti approached him. The embassy was evacuating as many people as they could to France, temporarily, and the representative

wanted to get Nelson and his family on a plane as soon as possible. Nelson told the representative that he wanted Anne and Caedelina to go—however, he would stay in Jacmel and continue working. Jacmel was his hometown, and it was out of the question to abandon his people at a time like this. It was agreed his wife and daughter would go without him, and they left almost immediately. Content knowing his family was out of harm’s way, Nelson got back to work without worry.

That night, after another exhausting day at the hospital, Nelson once again went to sleep in his tent. But his peace wasn’t to last. At 4:00 a.m. he was jolted awake by loud snoring right next to him. A man had moved into his tent, which was barely big enough for Nelson alone, and had fallen asleep.

Nelson jumped up and yelled, “Outside! Outside!” as he began pulling the man by his feet.

The man reluctantly got up and left the tent, but Nelson couldn’t sleep after the incident. He went back to the hospital instead. He told himself if he couldn’t go home, he would stay at work. He was fed up with trying to sleep outdoors.

The next day, a woman came to the hospital, complaining to Nelson about bad pains in her back. When he asked her if she knew why she was having the pains, she told him it was from sleeping outside. She did not have a tent, and she was sleeping on the ground.

Nelson responded, his eyes growing wide, “OK ma’am! I know of a tent that you can have right away.”

\*

Dick and Barb slept inside the clinic, in their own bed, the night of the earthquake, much to the dismay of many Haitians. But they were not as worried about the aftershocks or another

earthquake occurring. They were concerned about not being able to get in touch with family at home. They had had no luck with phone calls going through to the United States the day of the earthquake, so they had not communicated with anyone, and they knew their children must be worried about them. Dick and Barb had also gotten word that regularly scheduled flights to Haiti were all canceled, meaning the medical team was going to have to make alternate arrangements to get into the country. Toussaint Louverture International Airport was badly damaged, and flights were restricted to US military supply planes and aid groups only. It was imperative to get in touch with the team to make sure they were still going to make it to the clinic.

When they woke up the morning after the earthquake, Dick was able to reach his son Martin on the phone first. He assured Martin the clinic was fine and ready to function just as soon as the team could get to Haiti. After they hung up, Martin made calls to the team members, who busily worked to find alternative means to fly. Dick and Barb waited anxiously. It was a real possibility that the team would not make it to Haiti at all, and that made them extremely nervous.

The clinic hosts six medical teams a year, around the same time each January, March, May, July, September, and November. The teams are made up of doctors, nurses, and other trained medical professionals, as well as non-medical volunteers, who work together for a two-week period to see as many Haitian patients as time and resources permit. Considering the magnitude of the earthquake, Dick and Barb desperately needed the team to get to the clinic that January—and quickly. The Haitian people relied on the medical teams, and, after such a devastating disaster, their presence would be more important than ever.

Almost a week would go by before Dick and Barb got

word that the team was definitely going to make it into Haiti. Fortunately, given their backgrounds, a few of the medical volunteers had great resources when it came to disaster relief response, and they were able to make connections with private companies to fly them into the country. Some of the team members would be flying in small planes with other disaster relief workers, and some would be finding single seats on flights that were carrying in aid. Dick and Barb were so thankful. Though the makeup of the team had changed because of the earthquake—some of the volunteers originally scheduled to go to Haiti had to back out, and some new volunteers jumped in last minute—in the end, a full team of roughly twenty volunteers had committed.

During regular clinics, the volunteers flew into Miami from various locations across the United States to convene before flying to Port-au-Prince as a group. They would then take a short flight (or make the drive from Port-au-Prince) to the clinic in Jacmel. This time, because of the earthquake, the team would have to be rerouted to fly into Ft. Lauderdale Executive Airport where various private planes would bring them straight into the Jacmel airport, about seven miles away from the clinic, skipping over Port-au-Prince entirely. Since the team members would be flying separately, it would take longer to get them into the country, but considering the circumstances, Dick and Barb felt lucky the team was going to make it to Haiti at all.

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The day after the earthquake, Boyer drove Dick, Barb, and Larry into Jacmel to see the damage. None of them had ever seen so much wreckage and devastation. The town had been reduced to piles of broken-up concrete, which blocked the

sidewalks and the streets. Power lines were down everywhere they looked. Outside of the St. Michel Hospital, the main hospital in Jacmel, the scene was gruesome—family members stood weeping, closely protecting the bodies of their loved ones who lay dead in the street. Some yelled out for help that was nowhere to be found—aid workers had yet to arrive in Jacmel.

Boyer drove the group to the Department of Health, located near the center of town. The building, which Dick had visited dozens of times since he began working in Haiti, was now only recognizable by its sign. Before the earthquake, the sign had hung at the top of the three-story building, but now, as Dick stood next to the collapsed structure, the same sign, still attached to the crushed concrete, hung at shoulder level.

As they continued to walk through the streets of Jacmel, everyone they saw was in shock. They stopped and talked to a few local Haitians, and their reactions were all the same—no one could begin to think how Haiti would ever recover from such a horrible disaster. Before they returned to the truck to drive back to the clinic, the group noticed a few Haitian men sitting at a table in the middle of the street. One of the men was shuffling a deck of cards. The others were silent as they waited for the dealer to deal the next hand. Dick and Barb watched as the men sat and played their card game while the world around them was in ruins. There was nothing else these men could do. No one could do anything. There was no electricity, no water, no food, no medical aid, no emergency relief. No one could start to repair the damage. Everything was dead. There was nothing to do but sit and wait for help to arrive.

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By the second day after the earthquake, aid organizations

started appearing in Jacmel. The first foreign response teams were Canadian, followed closely by the Americans. And it was not just a few aid organizations—Dick estimates that maybe thirty or more international groups showed up in rapid succession. As relief workers poured in, the mayor and his entourage attempted to organize the groups around the center of town, but the situation was chaotic. The physicians who arrived with supplies set up tents and tables, and started treating the injured. Other physicians, however, had arrived with no medical supplies or medications, giving them no way to treat patients. So many groups had entered Jacmel all at once that it was almost impossible to organize all of them. Although the number of relief workers arriving in Jacmel showed Haitians how much foreigners were willing to support them, it was difficult to tell what was going on, not only for the aid organizations, but for the Haitians as well.

It would still be a few days before the clinic's medical team would start landing in Jacmel, so while they waited, Dick and Boyer made trips to and from the Jacmel airport to pick up supplies. Just as the aid organizations had arrived rapidly and in large numbers, so too had the supplies to the airport. The airport personnel were not prepared for the heavy traffic. No one person was responsible for aid coming into the warehouse and no one was in control of how supplies were being dealt out. No one seemed to know which supplies belonged to which organization. Dick would receive a manifest with his name on it, and, after picking up the boxes and bringing them back to the clinic, he would find they weren't medical supplies at all. He tried to return one such shipment. After receiving boxes containing items that were of no use to him, Dick had Boyer drive them back to the airport. But the Customs Department refused to accept the

boxes. They didn't know what to do with the returned supplies—no one had ever brought anything back to the airport.

A few days after the earthquake, authorities with the Department of Health asked Dick if he would consider bringing the medical team into town once they arrived so they could work closer to the patients living in the more severely damaged areas, instead of having the Haitians make the trip to the clinic. The clinic was located in a sector just outside Jacmel known as Cyvadier, about an hour by foot from the center of town, or a fifteen-minute drive. Cyvadier was not as populated as Jacmel, nor was it as badly affected by the disaster. The thought was that if Dick brought the team, along with medical supplies, to Jacmel to work side-by-side with the other aid organizations, the team might be able to help more patients than they otherwise would.

Dick contemplated the idea of working outside of the clinic. He knew they could pull it off—for fifteen years, the medical teams had operated without a permanent home, using various buildings near Jacmel to treat patients. But even though Dick knew it was possible, it wouldn't allow for the most ideal conditions—the team would have to move supplies and medications, water and food, as well as create makeshift exam tables and privacy tents. At the clinic, everything would be accessible and familiar for the team, many of whom were returning volunteers.

After serious consideration, Dick declined the mayor's request. The volunteers would work more efficiently if they stayed at the clinic as planned, and he did not want to disturb the clinic's already established system, both as a benefit to the patients and to the medical team. Dick was also worried that with so many other aid organizations already in Jacmel, he would only be adding to the disorder. He did, however, assure the Department

of Health authorities that any Haitian patient that came to the clinic would be taken care of to the best of the medical team's ability. But, this was no different than it had been before the earthquake—anyone was welcome to visit the clinic for care, no matter the circumstances. Haitians in Jacmel, as well as around the entire country, knew that they could rely on the Friends of the Children of Haiti clinic.

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The Friends of the Children of Haiti medical clinic, more commonly referred to as the FOTCOH clinic, is an impressive building. The 6,000-square-foot facility is made entirely of concrete, all painted freshly white, and is designed to comfortably host up to twenty-five visiting volunteers at a time. Each year, nearly 150 volunteers work at the clinic, serving over 15,000 Haitian patients.

The clinic is divided between three floors. The top floor houses Dick and Barb's private room. The couple usually spends more than six months out of the year in Haiti, and the clinic serves as their second home. Two additional small bedrooms are located on the third floor, along with two desks. One desk is for the clinic computer, and one is for Dick's endless paperwork—payroll stubs, receipts, invoices, clinic schedules, and patient reports. A balcony surrounds three sides of the top floor, offering a gorgeous view of the Caribbean Sea, as well as the plush landscape of the clinic property. Most nights, volunteers spend their time sitting on the balcony, shuffling plastic patio chairs to accommodate a preferred view, whether facing west, south, or east. Looking out over the ocean, only a few lights flicker off the coast, and the tranquility one finds serves as a perfect reset after a long day of work.

The kitchen is located on the clinic's second floor. Plastic tables and wooden chairs fill the large room. Barb is usually in the kitchen, along with a few Haitian staff members, preparing meals for volunteers. Their work begins at 5:30 a.m., before the sun comes up, and goes well into the afternoon. During the day, when the team isn't gathered together to eat, the tables are used to count pills for the pharmacy, to fold laundry, or for Dick and Barb to organize piles of dossiers, a French term used to refer to a patient's record. At night, the team can be found in the kitchen playing games or cards, or working on puzzles. A larger balcony is attached to the second floor off the kitchen, providing enough room for the whole team to gather for socializing. The remainder of the second floor is occupied by the men and women's dorm-style rooms, which are large enough to accommodate beds for all the volunteers and provide storage for personal belongings.

The first floor of the building is dedicated entirely to the medical clinic, though most patients won't enter the building, except to visit the pharmacy. Each morning, the clinic's Haitian staff sets up plastic tables and chairs outside the building. Directly out front, certain tables are designated for triaging patients. Once done with triage, patients are sent to a separate area to be seen by a doctor, whose tables are set up on the carport, underneath the second-floor balcony. Then, if needed, a patient is sent inside either for examination in a private exam room, to receive wound care or to visit the lab for testing. Dental patients and gynecological patients are seen inside the clinic as well, in separately marked rooms. Storage rooms on the first floor are filled with medications and medical supplies. The pharmacy also has a small waiting area, where patients receive instructions on how to take their medications properly.

The FOTCOH clinic is widely known in Jacmel, and the

locals know of Dick and Barb Hammond, whether they have ever met them or not, because of their long history working in Haiti. Haitians regard the clinic with the utmost respect, wearing their best clothes when visiting. Each team's arrival to the clinic is greatly anticipated by the community. Haitians patiently stand in line for hours outside the clinic walls, sometimes even sleeping overnight. Some Haitians walk for days to be seen by the medical volunteers. The clinic provides consistent care that so many Haitians lack, and for most of them, the clinic is the only option they have to receive medical treatment. In Haiti, the clinic is a symbol of hope, and of life.

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I met Dick and Barb in November of 2011, on my first trip to Haiti. In May of the same year, my sister Erin traveled to the clinic to volunteer. When she returned home, she had wonderful stories to tell about her experience. She excitedly talked about all the people she had met and how much she felt like a part of the team, even as a first-time volunteer.

A pharmacist, Erin had initially read about FOTCOH in a pharmacy magazine that described the work of the organization. At the time Erin came across the article, Dick and Barb had already been working in Haiti for nearly twenty-five years. Erin was impressed by the article and, having been looking for a volunteer opportunity, signed up. She volunteered with FOTCOH without knowing much more than what she had read, but she enjoyed her time at the clinic working alongside the other volunteers and the Haitian staff so much so that she continued to return to Haiti year after year. Soon, she had recruited me and other friends to volunteer along with her, and we have all returned numerous times.

FOTCOH's dedicated volunteer group is unyielding—over the years, hundreds of people from all over the United States have taken time away from their jobs and families, spending their own money to travel to Haiti so they can work at the clinic. The volunteers are like family to one another, looking forward to seeing each other once or twice a year, like children do at summer camp. Special relationships develop in a few short weeks, which is not surprising. It is hard to not become closely knit—the team works, eats, sleeps, and relaxes in the same building. Daily activities are done in groups, not only to ensure the safety of the volunteers, but also to give everyone an opportunity to bond, because, outside of Haiti, many of the team members would not have crossed paths in their lives.

Dick and Barb value the volunteers immensely, and it shows in everything they do. They are incredibly welcoming, starting from the first moment the team gets to the clinic, preparing beds and food ahead of time to make everyone feel at home. They are genuinely concerned about every volunteer, and they take the time to ask them questions and get to know the team the best they can. But Dick and Barb's appreciation is shown most greatly by their sheer presence in Haiti—they attend every clinic possible, even when it is suggested by doctors or others that they not do so. And that was what stood out in Erin's mind on her first trip. She was blown away when she stepped off the plane in Jacmel and the founders of the organization were standing on the runway.

Along with personally greeting every team that they can, Dick and Barb also work alongside the volunteers each day, having their own responsibilities at the clinic. And they are no spring chickens—both Dick and Barb were already in their mid-seventies in 2011 when I met them. But they rarely seemed

phased by the oppressive heat in Haiti or by how much work it takes to run the clinic. As rewarding as the work is, it is also exhausting, yet they rarely let it show. Neither of them moves around quickly, and Dick grumbles about how tired he is often, as though he is mad at his body, but he does more than many people half his age. I frequently think of Dick pattering up and down the stairs at the clinic, taking every chance he gets to remind me how he used to run up the stairs like I can. But even as a 31-year-old in good health, I am baffled by how much energy Dick and Barb have. And then I remember, Dick was twice as old as I was when I met him when he started building the clinic in Haiti.

For me, getting to know Dick and Barb has been one of the most enjoyable aspects of volunteering at the clinic. Dick is serious, without a doubt, but has a great sense of humor, and he is one of the best storytellers I have ever met, as well as a great listener. He has a stern, intimidating face that can easily transform into a full grin when he finds something humorous, which is often. At one moment, he might blow his top at something that has frustrated him (and he will yell if he feels it is warranted), and the next moment he gets teary-eyed when discussing the future of the clinic and what might become of it after he is gone. He is not erratic for these reasons—he is raw and heartfelt, and he cares intensely about others. Though it may sometimes seem as though Dick doesn't know what is going on around the clinic, this is never the case. He is quietly observing the team, wondering if they are having a good time, or if the work is too much for anyone. He is also incredibly in tune with the needs of the Haitian patients and staff, as is Barb, and for that they are loved dearly in Haiti, and they love the Haitian people just as strongly.

But to truly describe Dick Hammond, you have to talk about Dick and Barb together. They are not separate as people, although they have distinctly different personalities. Barb is more relaxed, giggling to herself as she works her way around the kitchen. She is small and feisty, and she never seems to stop moving, unless she is working on a puzzle or playing a game, and then her hands move just as fast as her mind does. Barb seems to find humor in almost everything, and she takes care of volunteers and Haitians alike in a way that is motherly and comforting. As I began to learn how well Dick and Barb complemented each other, it came to light how they managed to build a clinic in Haiti—they do everything together and are partners in all their endeavors—even apart, they rarely make decisions without consulting one another.

Something that has always impressed me about Dick and Barb, besides their determination and drive, is the fact that they started working in Haiti well past their youth, and even past middle age. When most people would be settling into retirement, Dick and Barb were just getting started on their life's work.