



Johnny Ipil-Seed News

The quarterly newsletter of *Trees for the Future*

Summer 2006

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Report from Mali: Forest Gardens and Desert Apples

The critical role women play in both community development and environmental conservation could never be defined better than it is in Sanankoroba, Mali. They are demonstrating both the power to absolutely degrade the environment AND the power to turn deserts into forests.

Women who are limited in their ability to generate income and determined to feed their children are quickly depleting the remaining pockets of tree cover; the sale of wood and charcoal gives them food security. A never-ending caravan of cars, pickup trucks, and buses carry the wood into Bamako to feed the city's need for fuel.

Local NGOs are working feverishly in rural villages to engage women in something, anything, that gives them an alternative source of income: gardening, honey, shea butter, dried fruit - the list goes on.

The long list of objectives of my trip entailed finding ways for poor women - living in what soon will be a desert - to increase food production, conserve water, combat insect infestations, improve soil quality, and keep wells from drying up, all while generating income and protecting what remains of the environment. It sounds



TREES' Technician John Leary, while on a Farmer-to-Farmer assignment through OIC Intern'l and USAID, receives a tour of this lush forest garden by the Dwalala Women's Group in Banamba, Mali, an extremely dry and degraded area.

like an impossible task, but we have been there, done that, and though we could never afford the t-shirt, we have accumulated 30 years of knowledge, as well as training materials, videos, and pictures, that show the way.

News from the Ruppe Center

Johnny Ipil-Seed News is a quarterly newsletter of TREES FOR THE FUTURE, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people of the world's poorest communities to begin environmentally beneficial, self-help projects.

This newsletter is printed by wind energy on recycled paper with soy-based ink and is sent to all supporting members to inform them of recent events, plans, financial matters and how their support is helping people.

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Your program continues to grow in a number of directions. Our headquarters, the Ruppe Center, has been bustling with activity.

TREES' technicians and volunteers have been working overtime trying to balance local activities with the growing international program.

Visitors from Cameroon, Haiti, Ethiopia, Honduras, Senegal, and other countries have been knocking down the door trying to get tree planting projects started in their homelands.

We have been doing our best to keep up with the many festivals, tree planting days, and Earth and Arbor Day activities while making presentations to local groups, churches, and schools.

The distance agroforestry training program is requiring constant attention as our first graduates turn in final agroforestry exams.

We are especially proud of the great work that Alan Wright and his students

at the Westtown School in West Chester, Pennsylvania, have done to grow and plant seedlings.



TREES' board member, Hank Dearden, plants his favorite sycamore seedling in Maryland.

Our office also is busy addressing communities' concerns about climate change, hurricanes, deforestation, and food security. What a great time to be involved in such a positive program!



TREES' volunteer, Sylvie Leary, poses with Johnny Appleseed (left) and Joe Howard, the county arborist (right), at the Arbor Day Celebration.

Forest Gardens and Desert Apples

from page 1



while putting a lot more money in the women's pockets. The trip report and plenty of technical mumbo jumbo can be found at plant-trees.org.

Desert Apples: From the first meeting with local technicians, I was made aware of what a major problem the lack of high-quality tree seeds is for reforestation activities. Technicians can only get seeds of eucalyptus trees, and eucalyptus is a terrible tree for people to plant in the sahel! To address this problem, I had brought a supply of seeds from TREES headquarters, and I had also asked our Senegal Field Rep, Omar Ndao, to make the 3-day trip and bring us a few bags of seed. Ultimately Trees for the Future distributed over 100,000 seeds consisting of orange root stock, several fast-growing forestry species, a few thorny trees that are good in living fences, papayas, henna, and desert apples.

Desert apples you might ask?

Having worked in Senegal (Mali's

On-site trainings: I visited 14 different villages where Malian men and women were gardening for subsistence and sale. During these visits I met with farmers and gave immediate recommendations based on ideas and technology that have proved successful in similar conditions. I helped to deliver seven technical trainings directly to over 200 people, most of whom were women. Most importantly, I spent countless hours explaining everything I know about market gardens, natural insect remedies, and ways to conserve water to the technicians of **The Malian Association for Environmental Conservation (AMCFE)**. With the input of those technicians and that of the participating women's groups, we ultimately designed an agroforestry intervention that will make tremendous improvement in the environment of Sanankoroba



desert apple

Top left: Mohamed Traore, a technician for AMCFE, is coordinating the seed distribution and nursery trainings for TREES in Mali. Here, Mohamed uses the agroforestry manual during a training.

Bottom right: John visited charcoal producers to discuss popular tree species, charcoal production techniques, and ways for producers to plant their own woodlots.

Bottom left: The wood cut by women in rural areas finds its way to the markets of Bamako.



Forest Gardens and Desert Apples



This forest garden in Tafele, Sanankoroba, has a good mixture of vegetables and fruit trees.

neighbor to the west) for 5 years, I have long heard of the mysterious desert apple, but I had never actually seen one. Desert apple is the rough translation from the French name, *Pomme du sahel*, which is a type of jujube fruit tree in the *Ziziphus* genus. There is a hardy, local variety, known in Bambara as *tomono*, which is the size of small grape. The desert apple must be grafted onto the local variety, and once it takes, the tree will produce fruit the size of a plum! It is crisp, delicious, tastes like an apple and is now giving farmers participating in our Mali and Senegal projects a source of cash income equivalent to \$40 of fruit per tree! Combining these desert apples with henna trees and pigeon peas, we were able to help communities plant fast-growing trees and bushes that produce marketable products and do not require much water at all.

Forest Gardens: Everywhere we go, communities can always benefit from more diversity, diversity, and diversity. This is exceptionally true in the African sahel. People are in need of diversifying both the

sources of food and income and the timing of production; otherwise they only get one big pay day per year when their one crop is harvested. Mixing species also minimizes insect infestations. Trees in crop fields and gardens minimize water and wind damage, and they stabilize temperatures and humidity.

Unfortunately, most gardens I visited in Mali were absolutely treeless. The soils were bare and degraded, vegetables were exposed to scorching temperatures, and insect infestations were ruining their eggplant, okra, and lettuce. Water was drying up as quickly as the beds were watered, and women were stressed by the chance of losing their only crop.

BUT there were a couple exceptions, and it looked as though Grace Deppner herself had designed and planted them. Despite the arid climate and lack of water, women were integrating lettuce, henna, onions, papayas, mangos, and countless other bushes, trees, and vegetable crops in their forest gardens.

With the expansion of forest gardens and the larger production of specialty products like desert apples, we are helping women ensure their families' food security for decades to come.



*Women in Sanankoroba identified henna and *Acacia nilotica* as two multipurpose trees they wished to have in their garden's windbreak. These trees give them marketable products and medicine.*

Grace Ghamogha Birnsai & THE WOMEN OF LUN

Spring brought us a most welcome visitor, Grace Birnsai, now studying at Grambling University. She will soon finish so she can return to her family in Cameroon and get back to planting trees.

Grace first contacted us early in 1990. She was then administrative assistant to the director of Peace Corps in Yaounde. She explained that women in Northwest Province had been part of a program to plant eucalyptus trees. They soon discovered that this project, started to help women in rural communities, actually left them worse off.

We sent seeds of trees that would be far more beneficial, along with a letter offering some technical and planning ideas. Soon we got a letter back. The seeds had been planted

and there were many new questions. Soon we were beginning regular correspondence, learning much more about the problems of those highlands, and starting to sense that this could grow into a very large project.

In January, 1991, while in Nigeria, I decided it was time to meet Grace and offer some "hands-on" help. I grabbed a short flight to Yaounde where I met Grace and her husband Chris Ghamogha, then sub-Minister of Agriculture, and all their family.

The next day Grace, Chris and I piled into a car and headed for her home town of Kumbo 450 km away in the mountains. No air-conditioner and the road was soon brick-red dust. By the time we reached the top and climbed out, we looked like three red clay statues.

In the town of Jakiri, we saw what eucalyptus can do: where once there was a large waterfall and lake with streams where children swam, now there was a dust-bowl. Women stood by the roadside, each with two 5-gallon buckets, waiting for the water truck so they could buy enough water to last them a few days.

The eucalyptus had been cut as poles. Each time one

was cut, two grew back. Their branches and roots kept extending onto other people's land where, farmers insisted, fluid oozing from them poisoned the land. Nothing would grow. This belief was enforced just last year by Prof. Wangari Maathai who stated that "even insects won't live under these trees". (But as we soon found, snakes, especially the dangerous Black Mamba, seem to love Eucalyptus trees. We looked at these trees from a distance).



Loretta, Dave, and Grace in front of the Ruppe Center

But *Leucaena* and other species did grow well - along with coffee and all the crops planted beneath them. One popular tree is "Pajum" (*Pygeum africanus*). The bark has real medicinal value for all sorts of intestinal disorders and the symptoms of malaria. It became a real income-generator

for the women of this project.

The next day, we got permission of the *Fon* (chief or traditional leader) to use land along the river for seedbeds so women wouldn't need to carry irrigation water long distances. That afternoon, 73 families joined together making seedbeds and planting almost a quarter-million tree seeds.

That's how the project continued to grow, with Grace's guidance and infectious spirit. **Over the next several years, the program she and Chris started took off in more than 300 villages and planted more than 4.5 million trees in these uplands.** She arranged a meeting with all the science teachers from the Province. This became a big part of the "Tree Pals" program the following year.

Grace talked to our staff about what she and Chris had begun with 73 women in her Lun Women's Group. We also talked about future plans, about when she returns to Cameroon and teams up with Chris again so that, together, we can make even more of these uplands green again.

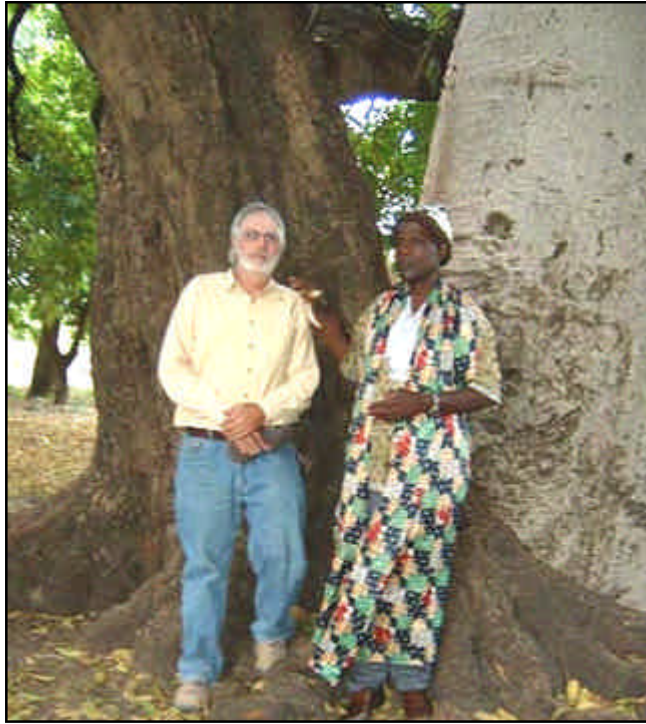
At Work in Zambia - Contribution by Garry Brooks

This story of a package of seeds that I received from Trees for the Future is still growing!

Early in 2005 I contacted John Leary at TFTF and asked him for tree seeds for one of my projects in Eastern Province, Zambia. With no hesitation, I received a reply from John. The seeds were on their way, to be sent to an address I had given him here in Zambia. Every time I would return to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, I would check to see if the seeds had arrived. "No, not yet", became the reply too many times. I emailed John and begged him to send more. It was obvious the seeds had gotten lost. No surprise here in Zambia, my care packages from Canada and Germany had succumbed to the same fate many times. He had no

problem with sending me more, but this time they would go to my home address in Canada and be transported in a back pack of a willing volunteer returning to Zambia. When they arrived I greeted that package as I would my chocolate goodies from Germany, hungrily. The brown envelope was battered and even had a hole in it. Much to my relief as I fought my way through the layers of plastic wrap, I saw the packs of seeds, Leucaena, Moringa and others, unopened. Even a book about Leucaena which now has been read more times than a New York Times Best Seller.

Timing of the seeds arrival was perfect; just as the first claps of thunder announced the start of the rainy season in this part of Southern Africa. The community was ready. The newly constructed tree nursery stood waiting besides the rehabilitated village well; the rows of soil-filled poly pots steamed in the afternoon heat after the first



Garry was honored to be taken to this spot and have his photo taken with Chief Sandwe the 9th. These two trees, one with white bark the other with black bark, were planted over 150 years ago by the chiefs forefathers and Dr. David Livingstone when he went through the valley. It was to symbolize the white and the black man working together. Garry is working with Chief Sandwe and his people to find a way toward a 'sustainable livelihood' for the people in the valley.

rain in many months. The planting began with no ceremony, just bent backs and tender loving care; the seeds quickly entered those pots. Felix, the committee chairman, stood proudly, recording the planted seeds and the different species in his new record book. Only time would tell now. I moved on to other projects and returned to Canada for the holidays and would not return until after the rains had stopped.

For the community, life would be very busy during this time. After planting comes the continuous weeding of their maize and then the harvest. It also is a very lean time as far as food in the village; they would patiently await the green corn and pumpkin leaves. Everyday I thought about those seeds, checking the mail and hoping for some word from the

village.

The letter came finally and it contained nothing but good news. The seeds had germinated, and were growing quickly. The thorn fence was winning the battle



Garry Brooks and members of the Mumbi Reforestation Club

At Work in Zambia

with the village goats who, as Felix described to me later, tried numerous times to breach the fence. The community had formed a club called Mumbi Reforestation Club and has twelve founding members. They wanted more seeds! "Bring us more seeds" appeared more than once in that fulfilling letter.

Time passed. I returned to Zambia and to the village



The Mumbi Reforestation Club protects seedlings from goats

on the afternoon of March 10, 2006. And as I entered the village I saw rows of small enclosures containing trees being protected from those pesky village goats. I toured the village over the next few days and was introduced to every tree and its new owner. Widows, headmen, committee members, the community at large and even the doubting Thomas's of the program proudly showed off their trees. I measured some of the Moringa and Leucaena and many were over thirty two inches tall and all very healthy in just over three months. I am so proud of this community. They have now planted over 3000 seeds that I was able to bring with me and I will return in the next weeks to see how things are growing and 'oh ya!' take them more seeds.

Editor's Note: Garry Brooks is a former Canadian VCO Volunteer now working with the Mumbi Reforestation Group and several others in Eastern Province, Zambia. After many years of owning and operating businesses in British Columbia, Garry changed his direction in life to working to give rural communities a better life. See more at www.africancommunityproject.com

Update from the Philippines: Waiting for the Rain

Through a grant by **Working Assets**, an additional 100,000 seedlings of several species were produced this season.

In the picture on the right, Program leader **Gabby Mondragon** and community leader **Dick Cruzado** with seedlings of *Acacia mangium* - ready to plant.

Acacia mangium, also known as black wattle, is an excellent tree for construction, boat building, and furniture and cabinet making.

We'll have a complete update in the next issue.



TREES, Hurricanes, and Gas Prices



Editor's Note - We see the global environmental, and economic, situation rapidly changing. The following article is intended to bring you our views and experiences about how all this affects each of us. Your comments will be appreciated.

June is here. Soon we'll see the warm days of summer. That's the good news.

The bad news is that this year's hurricane season is also about to start. Last year we used up the entire English alphabet, and some of the Greek alphabet, finding names for all the major tropical storms that came on us. The number of category 4 and 5 storms has doubled over the past 35 years. The average wind speed has increased by 50%.

Thanks largely to our steadily increasing use of fossil fuels, "carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration in the atmosphere has steadily increased from 280 parts per million (ppm) in preindustrial times to 381 ppm today" writes Karen McKee of the US Geologic Survey. Global climate change continues to raise the temperatures of our oceans. That, in turn, brings even more, and stronger, storms in the years ahead.

The trees that could remove this carbon are disappearing: the world loses more than 100,000 acres of forests every day. Instead of cleaning the air, smoke from forest fires in places such as Alaska and Indonesia pumps even more carbon into our atmosphere.

As we head for the beach, we shouldn't forget that 2005 was the hottest year on record and that there's reason to expect that record to be broken sometime soon. Maybe in 2006. The average water temperature between West Africa and the West Indies, an area we refer to as the *hurricane factory*, is one full degree warmer than it was one year ago.

Here at TREES, last August 29: the day Katrina met New Orleans, was a major turning point. Our e-mails and website have been twice as busy ever since. Most

people we have heard from were surprised that a storm could virtually wipe out a major American city so quickly.

We should mention that in his book *Bayou Farewell* (2003), former Peace Corps volunteer **Mike Tidwell** points out that it was much more than the storm. New Orleans was not originally built below sea level. Instead, over more than two centuries, it has been sinking. Much of the reason is the levees which don't let silt accumulate. This, in turn, causes the city and nearby bayous to continue to sink.

Again, oil played a very important part. In order to cut the cost of nearby drilling, oil companies cleared nearly 6,000 square miles of wetlands, trees, and grasses which, if still there, would have mitigated much of the surge of Katrina. The oil industry feels



Slash and burning farming, shown here in Ghana, contributes 12% of the carbon entering the atmosphere.

no sense of responsibility, stating that "there was no law against it" at the time they cleared the land.

Add to that the fact that as the water rose in New Orleans, gasoline prices also rose by \$1.00 and more. The price of gas has nearly tripled since 2000. The average American is now paying 60% more in energy costs than at the beginning of this century.

A recent issue of *Time Magazine* (April 3, 2006) pointed out that because global warming is increasing, the polar ice caps are melting much faster than earlier predicted, already threatening polar bears and smaller animals. Between now and 2050 we can lose as much as 25% of all species on Earth.

The point is being solidly driven home that our dependence on fossil fuel, much of it imported, seriously affects our health, our national security, our economy and, quite possibly, our very ability to survive on this planet. And, other than flashy advertising on TV, it seems not very much is being done about it.

The bright side of this is that public concern is quickly growing. More and more people demand action. This has brought on the usual run of opportunists with quick-fixes: buy an acre of rainforest. Or put an imaginary fence around an existing forest, then claim the "carbon credits" for all the carbon in that forest.

For 20 years, TREES has maintained that our country has been heading toward an energy crisis. That our over-dependence on fossil fuels is pulling us down a path to poverty and destruction and that our only salvation is through sustainably managing our natural resources which means, among other things, switching to renewable, organic sources of energy.

With that we maintain, and by now it should be obvious to all, that even now there is far too much carbon in the global atmosphere; that this business of "reducing emissions" is already too little, too late. **It's time we get around to finding ways to get that carbon back out of the air.**

As a practical matter, the only way to do this is to restore vegetation - forests - to the world's barren lands. Which, with your help, is just what TREES does.

This leads us to what just may be the good news: A great many people and businesses have seen this coming for a long time. They've done serious thinking and research on this development. First, looking into cost-effective ways to produce bio-fuels and with that, ways to address climate change, and the related issues of deforestation, declining global supplies of food and water, and worldwide poverty.

For example, how can this new technology bring workable alternatives to over-dependence on oil? How can we develop a sustainable and massive supply of biomass to provide ourselves, and the world, renewable, organic fuels to meet future energy needs?

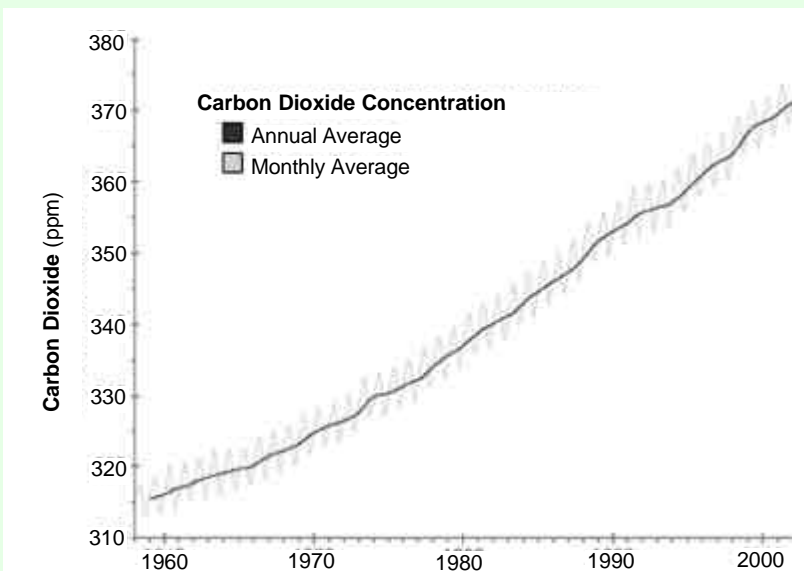
That need will be much more than could be expected from agriculture in North America. To be sustainable and cost-effective this program will necessarily be

global and will provide good jobs to many working people in developing countries.

Again, the reason is the high cost of energy. We like to think that our next fuel will come from corn and soybeans produced in our own midwest - and much of it probably will be. But it takes a lot of high-priced energy to drive the tractors that produce corn the way we

do it.

On these issues, because of our many years of experience producing biomass in the Developing World, TREES has found itself increasingly asked to participate in many of these discussions. In doing so, we've made the decision to join some of the groups working to resolve both the energy crisis and



Atmospheric CO2 levels have constantly increased throughout the 20th century. The current level is about 381 ppm. www.nasa.gov

the environmental crisis closely entwined with it.

The groups we have joined with are, in our opinion, also *working on the side of the angels*. That is because in order to be sustainable, these projects are designed to produce a great number of benefits - especially for the environment and the people of these developing communities.

When the **ACORE (American Council On Renewable Energy)** began an initiative called the Biomass Coordinating Council, we quickly joined and presented our views as to why this program must be international. We also became a member of the newly formed **SEED Alliance**. Dave Deppner was voted their first president.

We see plenty of work ahead but believe this will result in bringing even more attention and support to our own work helping communities around the world to reforest degraded lands. While many believe that biofuels are something for the distant future, we point out that Brazil managed to convert most of its vehicles to ethanol within two years...

...showing what can be done when concerned people demand it.

Welcome Loretta: *Mosquito Coast to Gulf Coast*



New employee Loretta Collins

hit the southeast coast of the U.S. on August 29, 2005. Still unemployed, I had nothing but time to watch the unfolding horror that followed on T.V. I wanted to help, but the utter pandemonium at the time didn't allow for rouge volunteers. Those without a plan got in the way. Within a week, however, I realized one advantage of my status as Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV). FEMA needed bodies, and RPCVs tend to be among the most willing bodies around. On September 13, I found myself boarding a plane to Orlando, FL to take part in Crisis Corps' first domestic assignment in its 45-year history. Following two days of training in FEMA's Individual Assistance Program (IA; the program in charge of doling out the heavily publicized \$2,000 check cards in expedited assistance), fourteen RPCVs were off to Baton Rouge.

I had been home a little less than two months from Panama, where I spent two years in the Peace Corps, when Hurricane Katrina hit the southeast coast of the U.S. on August 29, 2005. Still unemployed, I had nothing but time to watch the unfolding horror that followed on T.V. I wanted to help, but the utter pandemonium at the time didn't allow for rouge volunteers. Those without a plan got in the way. Within a week, however, I realized one advantage of my status as Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV). FEMA needed bodies, and RPCVs tend to be among the most willing bodies around. On September 13, I found myself boarding a plane to Orlando, FL to take part in Crisis Corps' first domestic assignment in its 45-year history. Following two days of training in FEMA's Individual Assistance Program (IA; the program in charge of doling out the heavily publicized \$2,000 check cards in expedited assistance), fourteen RPCVs were off to Baton Rouge.

CHAOTIC: Perhaps that is the best word to describe the next 60 days. We were assigned to a "Disaster Recovery Center" (DRC), managed by FEMA and representatives of organizations that were assisting the evacuees. As it happened, after almost two weeks of waiting for FEMA to place us, and the anticipation and subsequent passing of Hurricane Rita, six of us were sent to Gretna just across the Mississippi River from the well-known French Quarter and the infamous Superdome and Convention Center in downtown New Orleans. On Sept. 28, one month after the initial disaster, the Gretna DRC opened its doors. Six RPCVs and two firemen sat at a long table behind 8 laptops, equipped with web-access to the IA Program and "applicant" records. The training received in Orlando could not possibly have prepared us for what lay ahead: twelve hour days and endless lines of angry, frustrated, desperate people looking for answers and waiting anywhere from four to eight hours just to hear there case is "pending." That's what it said on the my screen: PENDING. In FEMA's defense, they were and are dealing with a catastrophe many times larger than



Loretta, kneeling, leads a project design and management workshop in Palmar Abajo in central Panama.

Welcome Loretta: *Mosquito Coast to Gulf Coast*



Hurricane Katrina www.nasa.gov

anything ever in their history and those working on the ground were doing the best they could. When Hurricane Wilma hit Florida, their too few resources were stretched even further.

Given everything, many of those I assisted were far more patient than I believe I could be in the same situation. Louisiana is one of the poorest states in the country and its citizens are no strangers to hardship. In fact, generally speaking, the affluent and insured were far more demanding than the average person who sat down in front of me. I listened to those who said they would never leave their homes, and those who were leaving and not looking back. Those who cursed FEMA, and those who believed we were doing the best we could. Screaming and crying, thank you's and blessings. Latinos and Vietnamese grateful to find someone speaking their language, and a few illegal aliens to whom I painfully

is yet to be determined. Most predictions point to another rough hurricane season in 2006. To illustrate the continuing need, the DRC in Gretna, and many others in the surrounding areas are still open and running, as of this printing. Americans along the Gulf Coast continue in the recovery effort, and are crossing their fingers for a reprieve from Mother Nature in the coming months.

had to explain that our program could not help (although they were eligible for disaster food stamps).

By mid-November, the initial shock had worn off but the long road still laid ahead. Many people still had no place to live, and it was time for me to go home.

Nine months later, what will become of New Orleans and the surrounding parishes



St. Bernard's Parish one month after Katrina: Loretta walked around in six inches of mud, gazing at the tasks laid before her and the other Crisis Corps Volunteers.

Haiti: Back to Basics

If you spent a week or so in a village in rural Haiti, you might come away with the impression that nobody ever cared enough to bring any useful ideas to that place.

You'd be about right.

Brought here as slaves to work the sugar *habitations* of the French colonists, Haitians retained only the most basic skills of land management from their African heritage. Since winning their independence in 1804, rural Haitians have received little training.

Two very different societies developed. One in the city where there is light, education, culture, and money. The other in the hills and farmsteads of the *paysans* without whom, if you think about it, life in the cities would not have been possible. And yet, for two centuries, the needs of rural Haiti were, and continue to be, largely ignored.

Much of the money that brought wealth to the cities came from timber sales. Haiti, once called the "Pearl of the Antilles", was rich with oak, cedar, mahogany and other valuable trees. By 1950, with modern machinery available, the rate of deforestation was beyond reason. Still there was, and continues to be, little official concern for the needs of the people of these devastated lands.

The declining base of natural resources, with no response from the national leadership, has now brought this house of cards down so low that it's impossible to look the other way.

The diaspora of more than two million Haitians who were able to get out constitutes one of the greatest "brain drains" in human history. Of the remaining population of about six million, some 40% now live in the

city of Port-au-Prince: their lands have failed them and they come to the city seeking jobs that don't even exist. City streets? Lights? Schools? Nowhere near enough



Dave demonstrates how to make a tree nursery for members of Bethel community who have now launched a major reforestation campaign.

to meet basic needs - and more people on the way every day.

The weather is also changing: hotter year-by-year, and the rains don't come as they used to. When they do, there are no trees to direct the water into underground aquifers. And so rainwater erodes hillsides and washes back to the sea: in the village where I stayed, one light rain brought on a flash flood that drowned five goats and a dozen chickens. By next morning, the gully was bone dry.

In April, I (Dave) and our advisor **Franz Stuppard** spent two weeks in a village called Bethel, nestled in the foothills about 30 miles north of the Capital. It's our hope to build a seed production farm and demonstration site there and work has now started. Home was a house next to a dry gulch looking at a barren mountain on the other side: barren but covered with goats instead of trees.

So basic lesson #1 was that there is no sense even trying to restore tree cover unless we figure a better way

Haiti: Back to Basics

to maintain the grazing animals. That took a bit of selling because people "have always run their goats up there". We showed how people could save money, save labor, and get a whole lot more benefit from their animals if they carried the grass to them instead of the other way around. Most people said they would give it a try.

In this brief visit, we were able to help build a local organization, demonstrate some seedbed management technology, show alternatives to the grazing systems there, and plant about 20,000 tree seedlings. Nearly all of the 200 families of Bethel want to join in.

We were also able to meet community leaders from other towns along the coast, including several who want to bring the idea of shade-grown coffee to the mountains above St. Marc, as well as a new group starting projects along the Haiti-Dominican Republic border. All ask our help and we are now sending seeds and training materials to them.

Can Haiti solve its devastating environmental problem? Certainly that's what the people of the rural communities want and they're already taking the lead. But



they will need a lot of help, some incentive for their labors, and a whole lot of basic technology. With your support, we will continue to provide this - one village at a time.



Top: Goats swarming the hillsides.

Left: Max Antoine delivering a speech during a training in Bethel.

Below: Seed pods of useful trees that are available locally.



At last we have: A MASCOT!

Over the years, we have often been asked why we don't have a mascot. After all, World Wildlife has their Panda, GEICO has their Gecko, Borden's has Daisy the cow and Merrill Lynch has their bull. Why don't we have one?

We've been thinking about it for a long time. Then, in Haiti last month we met her. Her name, by the way, is Evangeline.

A goat? Why a goat? Because we think we, and the people we help plant trees, should have a great deal of sympathy and admiration for goats. It was during a training session last month in Haiti that we began to realize just how big a role they potentially play in our work.

First of all, goats are too often accused of being the bad guys, just as their owners are often blamed (mostly by loggers) for the destruction of the forests.

In both cases that's because their needs are too often mis-understood. Food is one of those needs. No, goats don't eat tin cans, although they seem to relish the glue on the labels.

But they are persistent browsers. The story goes round - and somewhere around here we have a photo to prove it - of a goat sitting in the highest branches of a tall tree, eating the last of the leaves of that tree. With a flexible mouth and plenty of determination, a goat can eat a tree seedling right down to the roots - and then eat the roots too. If you let it. We've seen a lot of projects go down because nobody planned for stray goats (or antelopes or any other grazing animals). We've been there and we found ways around this.

Looking at it from the eating standpoint, goats can make do with some fairly rough forage. They're one of the most efficient animals around for converting forage

into meat and milk. They're hardy. In the Developing World, they are often called the "poor man's cow". Many families think of them as their savings account, which can yield an impressive annual return if the goat is cared for well.

That's exactly the point. Evangeline and her friends are not well cared for. They live in a village called

Bethel, where virtually no soil is left on the hills, where the only cover left is thorny bushes that can even defy... a goat.

Every day Evangeline and hundreds of other goats, along with a few horses, donkeys and cattle, are turned loose in those hills. Every day the forage supply gets more sparse and so they walk ever farther, their sharp hooves digging at the loose soil.

The rains come and the soil, with their droppings, is washed down the stream and to the ocean: all that vital organic matter needed to restore these

lands is lost.

Just as forestry departments around the world like to blame the "peasants" for cutting down the forests, by now you may be thinking it should be blamed on goats. But wait a minute. It's not the fault of the goat. As we explained to the farmers of that village, by its very nature, the goat needs to be their best friend in bringing trees back to those devastated lands while, in the process, bringing a lot more income to their owners.

But instead, because people don't manage these animals, they're turning them into their own worst enemies. And so we spent a couple of days in Bethel talking about how to make Evangeline and her associates a major part of the rebuilding, rather than the continuing destruction, of those fragile mountains.



Opinion: How Did You Like Your Strawberries?



I just got back from Haiti where we are establishing a training and seed production center. A few weeks ago we attended a reception for the new President of Haiti, Rene Preval, here in Washington. We hope he'll be able to bring a responsive government to that long-suffering country. We

met quite a few of the Haitian Diaspora; more than two million of them live in the US and Canada.

I also recently spent some days in California, trying to explain that there are answers to the threat of global climate change if enough of us are willing to work together. Driving up near Oxnard, I passed mile after

crime they committed - trying to give their children a chance for a future? If that were your family wouldn't you do the same? Is our country now so shriveled in spirit that we don't have a place for them?

Over the 27 years Grace and I have been married, we have served America in some pretty tough places. The Philippines under the dictatorship of first, Ferdinand, then Imelda, Marcos; on to Indonesia under Suharto, and then to Somalia and M. Siyad Barre. We know about people suddenly disappearing and nobody wanting to talk about it. We know about that knock on the door at 2:00 in the morning. We tried to get the work done in an atmosphere of total fear in Aristide's Haiti. Like those people picking strawberries, it gave us a better appreciation of what America can be - if we want it to be.

We came to the belief that our country would be truly



Strawberry pickers in California

mile of seemingly endless fields of strawberries. There were people in the fields, stooping to pick the berries.

I pulled off and watched them for a while, thinking: no way, even when I was young, could I have worked that hard, all day long - and for not much pay at that.

Later at the motel I turned on the TV. Yesterday, our Senate passed a bill to help immigrants who are here illegally, taking away their fears of "migrasi" and getting them on the path to citizenship. Today those Senators took it all back, both sides blaming the other. Now migrants and their children are marching in the streets, pleading their case while enduring viscous insults - and some beatings by our 21st century "Minutemen".

"They're breaking the law and they know it! Send them back or put them in jail." Would we want those words inscribed on our Statue of Liberty? What is this

blessed if we gave amnesty to all these twelve million people who somehow managed to get here because they know what US citizenship would mean to them and their children, and who are willing to work to gain that - if we're willing to give them the chance.

We don't expect that everyone will agree with us. But just remember, the next time a boat load of dead Haitians washes up on a Florida beach, those families would never have taken that risk and they would have stayed in Haiti, if there was any chance at all they could have had a decent life there.

Every time you help us start a village project, you're giving more families that chance; a chance to remain productive and successful in their own farms and homelands. Enjoy some strawberries and think about it.

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Notes

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