

When was your best day in Rotary?

That question was asked of me a while back. I have been blessed with many amazing days and many more are yet to come. However, I remember July 24, 2004. I was in the middle of my third trip to Haiti. A two hour car ride had landed us in rural farm country 21 miles away from our base in Hinche. It was 90 degrees F. and we had traveled over some of the toughest roads I had ever seen. Packed four to the back seat on this bumpy ride we had long since given up on trying not to touch or sweat all over the person next to us.

Just before noon we arrived in a village called Ti Kampeche. We were there to attend a dedication ceremony for the very first well drilled as part of our large matching grant project, which we call Haiti Safe Water Plus. I was there with seven others from the US, all with Rotary connections. Included in the group was my then 19 year old daughter, Ashley.

We arrived in Ti Kampeche to find a packed church: Locals immediately got up and offered us their seats. The church was cool: It was cinder block, but painted in a faded blue and teal. The locals danced, prayed, sang and performed a play: All along they thanked God and Rotary for the water well. The play told a story of how locals were no longer sick, the illnesses of the past having come from bad water not evil spirits.

During the service, my eyes glanced to Ashley. She sat next to a little girl from the village. While my daughter smiled the warmest smile you can imagine, the little girl reached out to touch Ashley's very white skin. Ashley lightly touched her back. They giggled together.

Moments later we were at the well site, cutting the ribbon and pumping the first "official water" from the first of many wells to come. I stooped down and drank; so very cool and refreshing! One of us pumped water for the senior members of the village.

We soon were back in the car and off again on the dusty road to two other villages scheduled for drilling.

9 hours later and after 5 more hours of riding, we were at La Maguana, a bar/restaurant in Hinche. We quenched our thirst with Prestige beer, and we danced with the Haitian Rotarians as they taught us their favorite Caribbean step. In the middle of our dance, Ashley said into my ear "Dad, I never knew Rotary was like this."

I too never knew Rotary could be like this. Rotary makes us better friends, better business leaders and better citizens of the world!

Dance with me! - tommie t