



# Grace!

SUMMER 2007

AT WORK IN HAITI & THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



*"The death wail has been dimmed for us by the clapping and singing of children given their chance to live. Healed children have gone from Grace Children's Hospital back to their homes knowing that Jesus cares for them in their world and that He has riches awaiting them in the next. We have been very privileged to share in the beginnings of what we see developing into a great blessing to the children of Haiti."*

*(Virginia Snavley 1969)*

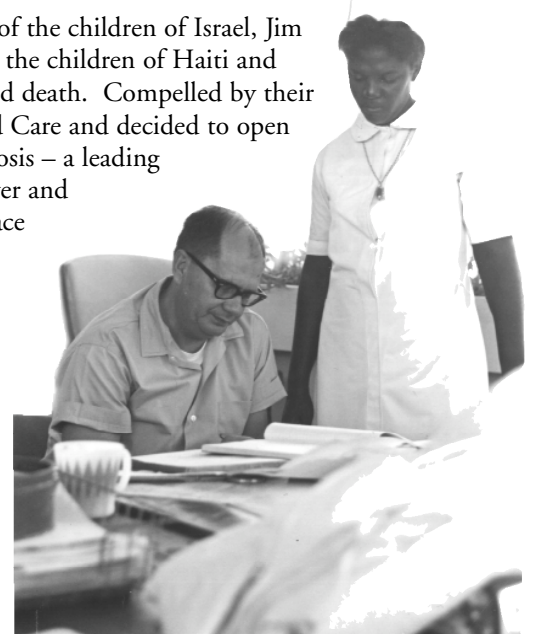
## GRACE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL Celebrating 40 Years in Haiti

There's something special about turning forty. For one thing, the number forty has incredible significance in the Bible. It rained for forty days and forty nights after Noah completed the ark; Saul, David and Solomon each reigned as king for forty years and Jesus spent forty days fasting, praying and enduring temptation. Moses, the leader of the ancient Israelites, spent forty years wandering the wilderness of Sinai. But the number forty is also important to International Child Care, because this year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of Grace Children's Hospital.

Like Moses, who had a deep compassion for his enslaved fellow Israelites, Jim and Virginia Snavley had deep compassion for the plight of the Haitian people. As they first wandered the streets of Haiti's capital city, back in the early 1960s, they were overcome by what they saw. The Snavleys had never witnessed such extreme poverty and quickly realized why Haiti had earned the dubious honor of being the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. As they walked, they were surrounded by sprawling slums, mounds of garbage, ramshackle dwellings and overwhelming despair. Port-au-Prince was nothing like the touristy façade of the beach front where their cruise ship had docked just minutes before. What began as a vacation then became a mission of love as the Snavleys made a commitment to serve "the least of these" in Haiti.

Just as God chose Moses to serve as the liberator of the children of Israel, Jim and Virginia Snavley answered God's call to serve the children of Haiti and liberate them from an endless cycle of sickness and death. Compelled by their faith, the Snavleys established International Child Care and decided to open a small clinic for children suffering with tuberculosis – a leading cause of death in Haiti. In 1967, after much prayer and determination, the Snavley's officially opened Grace Children's Hospital.

Today, Grace Children's Hospital is recognized as one of the leading pediatric hospitals in Haiti. The hospital provides inpatient care for children with HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, and other diseases as well as continuing its original emphasis on tuberculosis. In addition, Grace Children's Hospital offers outpatient services including general pediatrics, reproductive health, and a state-of-the-art eye clinic. Each day an average of 300 patients receive treatment through the outpatient services at the hospital. *(Continued on back page)*



Jim Snavley at Grace Children's Hospital, 1967



Photo © Carol Hunsberger

# Reflections

By John Snavley

# Reflections



In 1961 my parents, Jim and Virginia Snavley, moved our family to Port-au-Prince from Indiana, and settled in an area called the Bristout Valley. They believed that God had sent them to Haiti, but they weren't exactly sure why so they just started trying different things in an effort to help the Haitian people. They imported surplus food to Haiti from America and distributed it to children. They also rented a small house for sick, homeless children and

periodically sent word through the valley that medical assistance was available. On these "clinic" days, people packed the road outside the Bristout house.

I recall that many individuals and organizations came to Haiti to help in the 1960s, and then too often they would widen their scope until their resources were stretched thin. Certainly, every life is worth saving, but Jim and Virginia wanted to be agents of a specific kind of change, so they kept casting about for their "purpose." In retrospect, I am often struck by how hard my parents worked during those years - part natural work ethic, part response to the endless crisis.



Virginia Snavley assisting a gravely ill child, 1968

Out of necessity, my mom, Virginia, began helping the mothers in the valley bury their children - the expense of a burial, however modest, was beyond the means of most of the people living there. When a baby would die, Virginia and helpers would have the body washed, a cloth-covered wooden casket built, and would provide a few words of scripture. It took some detective work to learn that many of these children were dying of tuberculosis.



**"Eventually, Jim and Virginia purchased a palatial property from an official who had fallen out of favor with Duvalier... In 1967, the house was converted into Grace Children's Hospital and filled with children with tuberculosis."**

Most folks didn't admit to having TB, because they would be sent to the tuberculosis sanitarium. At the sanitarium some people lay down on a few rags, others straw mats, and then, for the most part, prepared to die. This offended Jim and Virginia's sensibilities, because tuberculosis was treatable. So they began taking food and medicine to the sanatorium and people began leaving alive.

Eventually, Jim and Virginia purchased a palatial property from an official who had fallen out of favor with Duvalier and needed to liquidate in a hurry. The home was in one of Port-au-Prince's nicer suburbs, a mansion really. In 1967, the house was converted into Grace Children's Hospital and filled with children with tuberculosis. Not all the rich neighbors were pleased. With import duties and customs fees, the cost of treating a child

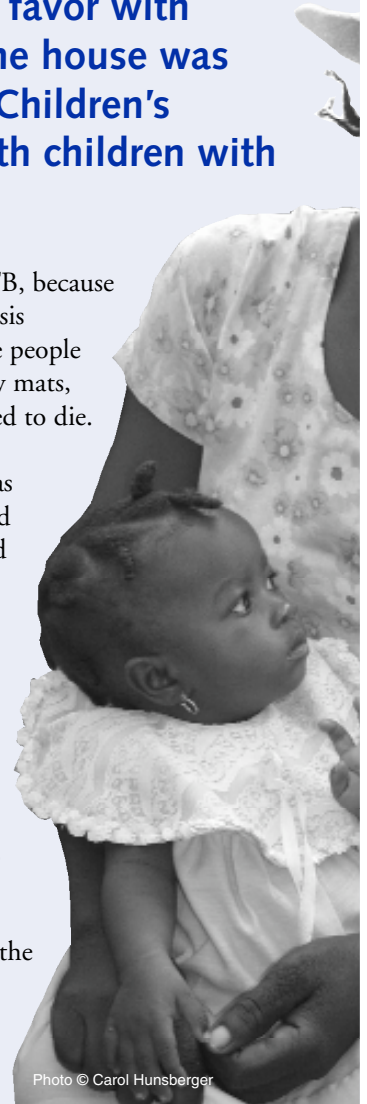


Photo © Carol Hunsberger

with tuberculosis was about \$15 per day — about 20 times the annual income of the average Haitian at the time. Sources for pharmaceuticals were found in Scandinavia, and arrangements were made with the United States Navy for free transport of the drugs using Navy ships. Jim met with Haitian officials and told anyone who would listen that treatment could be provided for a child with tuberculosis for about \$1 per day. Import officials declined to cooperate, pointing out, quite reasonably, that their mission was to collect revenue, not give it away.

One day a captain in the Haitian army brought his daughter to the hospital for treatment, and my dad began sharing the vision of free treatment for any child with TB. The captain turned out to be one of Francois Duvalier's bodyguards and arranged for Jim Snavley to meet "Papa Doc." An operating agreement was drafted, using other NGO agreements as models, that covered such issues as the right to vaccinate — even though there was no TB vaccine at the time — and the right to manufacture drugs. It was blessed by Papa Doc and signed by Haitian officials. Many of those stipulations came to be useful over the years.

Upon arrival of the first few large shipments of pharmaceuticals, the customs officials ignored this agreement, and levied large tariffs and outright commissions. Jim challenged them to call the presidential palace, which they did. Duvalier told them that "Mr. James" had a permanent exemption and it was to be enforced. Supplies flowed smoothly thereafter.

With TB treatment now more accessible and affordable, many churches in the U.S. saw a real opportunity to save lives and began to contribute to Grace Children's Hospital.

A doctor pointed out that the Snavleys were taking in too many children with advanced TB. "One advanced case such as this," he said, "will take up a bed for 6 months and still cannot be saved. With this same bed, in the same amount of time, you can save TWO children in the early stages of TB." This was true, and it was hard, but good, advice. Yet somehow they could always put one more bed somewhere and no one was ever turned away. We lived upstairs, above the hospital, and I remember mom and dad putting a little baby in our bathtub with pillows, bedding and an IV.



A man appeared at our gate one evening with his two small children. His wife had just died of tuberculosis, and one of his children was terribly sick with it. He had walked over the mountains from the city of Jacmel, because he had heard there was a place where his children could get treatment. He had 35 cents and a tin suitcase. The family was given a place to sleep for the night, and his child was admitted to the hospital. Based on his home town, we all started calling the man "Jacmel" (sort

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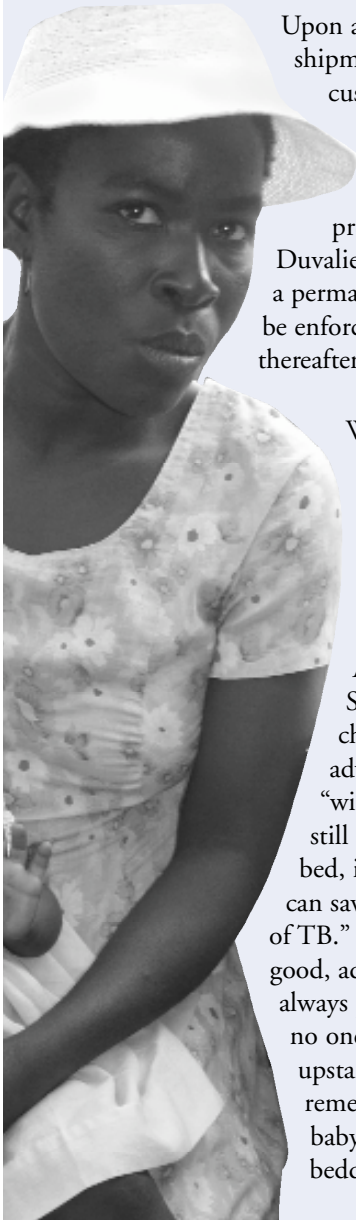
of like "Indiana" Jones), and he took a job at the hospital, dawn to dusk in 100-degree weather, carrying feed sacks and pushing a wheelbarrow. Jacmel was a big strong guy, and no one ever gave him the easy jobs.

In the evenings, I could look out of my window and see Jacmel's cookfire on the second floor of an abandoned house next door. He slept under the stars. He wore the same clothes every day. One day, I said, "Dad, if you paid that man more money, he wouldn't have to sleep in an abandoned house." My father became animated as he often did when he warmed to his subject. "Son," he said, "we came here for the children. We're like Procter and Gamble. We make soap, soap, soap."

Along with soap, P&G now makes toothpaste, disposable diapers and coffee. But they grew to global prominence making soap, and Jim Snavley always admired their focus. ●

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*John Snavley, the youngest of the three Snavley children, was four years old when the Snavley family moved to Port-au-Prince. He now lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.*



Through forty years in the wilderness, Moses' leadership helped the Israelites overcome tremendous obstacles. Likewise, the leadership provided by Jim and Virginia Snavley, and the strong foundation they laid, has helped International Child Care overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles over the past four decades. Despite political crisis, internationally imposed economic sanctions and overwhelming poverty and despair, International Child Care's programs in Haiti have not only survived, but have expanded. Just like Moses depended on God for manna, the Snavleys had to depend on the financial support of their North American friends, partnership with international colleagues and the government, collaboration with other non-profit organizations and genuine relationships with the Haitian people.

It took Jim and Virginia Snavley tremendous will, patience, compassion, humility, and great faith to accomplish their mission. Today, their work continues, and thousands of hands have joined in the effort to make the vision of health and hope for children and families in empowered communities a reality. Forty years is a long journey, but it is far from the end of the road for International Child Care. Virginia was fond of quoting the biblical passage from Habakkuk, "Though it tarry, wait for it..." and ICC will continue to grow and change, listening for God's divine direction for many years to come. ●

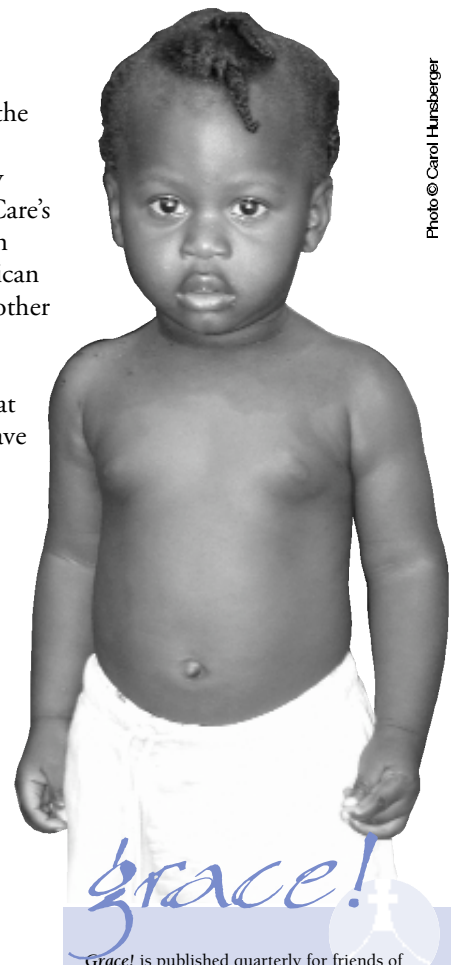
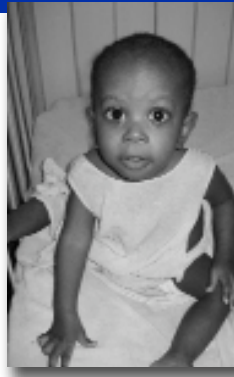


Photo © Carol Hunsberger

## Amazing Grace

### *Sonel Innocent*

Sonel is a beautiful baby with quite the personality. He doesn't like to sit still because during his stay at Grace Children's Hospital he has begun to learn how to walk. He is also a little bit of a trouble maker at meal times as he impatiently grabs for his food. Sonel is full of life and when he looks at you with his big brown eyes and delightful smile, you know he's a blessing from God to all who work at Grace Children's Hospital.



Although Sonel is a happy baby, his last name reveals his unfortunate situation. "Innocent" is the name that the hospital gives to a child who is without a last name. Sonel was found abandoned in a severely malnourished state near the Grace school on January 26, 2007. Due to the fact that he was found alone, the staff does not know where Sonel is from or how old he is. They estimate that he was born around March of 2006.

No one comes to visit Sonel, but he is loved nonetheless by the mamas and other staff members at the hospital. Sonel has now fully recovered from malnourishment. In fact, he eats so much that the mamas call him "petit cochon" which means "little piglet."

Grace Children's Hospital has brought Sonel from sickness to health and, in the absence of his family, continues to love and care for him until a place is found for him to go. Each year the hospital takes in many sick children who end up being abandoned. In May, 2007 there were eight such children at Grace. One must wonder what would happen to little ones like Sonel if Grace Children's Hospital weren't there. Praise God that International Child Care has the ability to help "the least of these." ●

*By Sarah Pascoe. Sarah, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, spent the month of May volunteering at Grace Children's Hospital.*

*Grace!* is published quarterly for friends of International Child Care. ICC is a Christian health agency working in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to change conditions which make people sick, hungry, unemployed and afraid.

ICC depends on individuals, churches, and donor agencies for the financial means to serve. A response card and envelope are enclosed for your contributions. Your gift will be receipted for income tax purposes.

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