

Mary Ellen Graney Decker '78 has dedicated her life to bringing medical assistance to Haiti's neediest.

# Drop by Drop

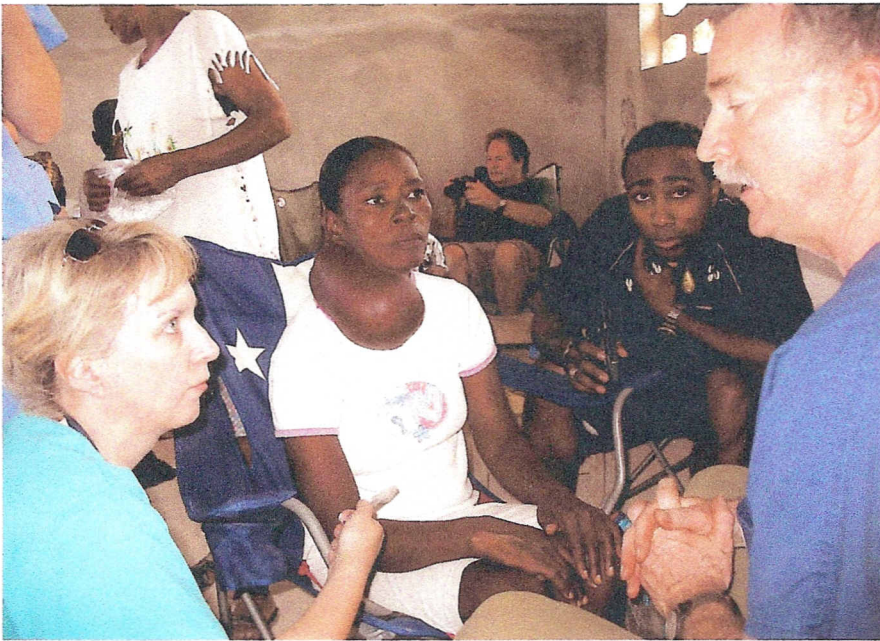


Mary Ellen holds Luska Lynn, the daughter of Sonie, right, a Haitian who Mary Ellen has trained to care for wound patients. For a year Sonie treated more than 200 patients and taught villagers wound care and prevention.

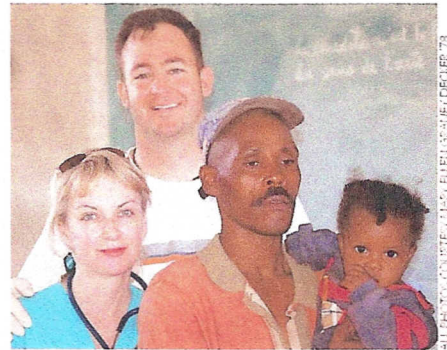
**S**even years ago Mary Ellen Graney Decker made her first trip to Haiti. She was one of four *blancs* (whites) and one Haitian to make a survey trip to Zorangé, one of the country's most remote villages, about 15 miles northwest of Baintet. "We chose Zorangé because

the founder of the Hope for Haiti Foundation, Jean Elade Eloi, grew up there," said Mary Ellen. "He's dedicated his life to giving back to Haiti." At age 19 Elade came to the United States to attend college and today is employed as a chemist in Oregon. When he was 9, a

missionary arrived in his village in a JEEP. "Elade had never seen a car before and was so impressed by this man," said Mary Ellen. "From this experience he knew that life beyond Haiti must be very different, with many opportunities." Not surprisingly, however, the man



After a five-day walk to the Zorangé clinic, a woman presents the medical staff with a huge goiter which she began to develop at age 15.



Mary Ellen and husband Jerry with a Haitian father and son.

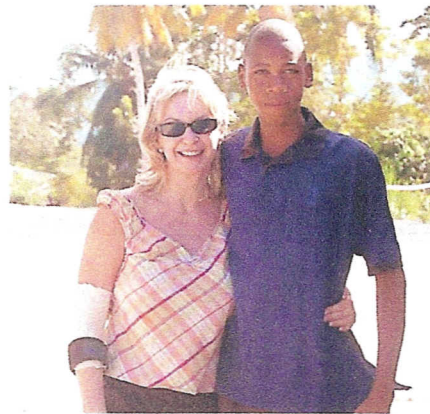
never returned. So great is the need for their services, mission groups often do not return to the same place twice. With this in mind, Elade, at the tender age of 9, vowed that he would become someone who would return to help Zorangé, not just for a week or two. His promise became the catalyst for the vision and philosophy of the Hope for Haiti Foundation: Haiti must help Haiti...drop by drop.

"Every Haitian must be part of the solution," writes Elade in a December 2005 message posted on the Foundation's website. He goes on to say, "Together we will take Haiti from where it is today, a place of fear and desperation that gives visitors chills down their spine to a place where tourism will once again be a part of the tradition and culture."

It was during the initial survey trip to Zorangé that Mary Ellen met Elade, who shared with her his vision for the Foundation. He also asked her to help him started it, and she now serves at it medical director. Since the establishment of the Foundation, Haitians along side volunteers have built a school and medical clinic. In addition, they have developed a 5-, 10-, and 20-year

college seminary training, and health care education to the people of Zorangé. The Foundation plans to raise funds to construct a hospital and community health education center.

Mary Ellen, the Foundation's medical director, is quick to point out the citizens of Zorangé are fully invested in the work that is going on in their village. "We breeze in every now and then for a week or two, but they remain there all year long," said Mary Ellen. In January 2007, the Foundation left the clinic open, staffed by one Haitian RNP. They hope to hire a second RNP next fall. "Funding is a huge obstacle,"



Mary Ellen with Johnny, who needs orthopedic surgery. The Deckers hope to adopt him.

said Mary Ellen, "but one that does not stop me from dreaming of the possibilities for these amazing people. My next project is to organize the Foundation's first surgical/dental and cataract medical trip."

Until recently the Foundation has had to limit their intervention to acute care, infectious disease, nutritional support, and community health education. Increasingly, the Foundation's focus has been on raising money to dig wells, improving sanitation, building schools, and offering spiritual guidance. The organization's most important objective has been, according to Mary Ellen, to build relationships and identify Haitian leaders within Zorangé. "Our vision is to plant schools, churches, and clinics in and around Zorangé."

Hope for Haiti models itself on Zamni Lasante (Creole for Partners in Health), a state of the art medical compound founded by Dr. Paul Farmer in Cange. Zamni Lasante received a \$40,000,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation last year, and Hope for Haiti prays the Gateses will recognize their work with a generous grant.

Currently, Mary Ellen is planning the Foundation's 2008 trips. They will be seeking the participation of medical professionals in numerous specialties. "If there are any members of the Canterbury family interested in volunteering they should contact me."

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