

Kanaval - February 2008

February 4 - 10,2008 Port-au-Prince, Jacmel and Fondwa

I was picked up at the airport by my cheerful partners of Fondwa, Max Delices the president and Amenold Pierre, the professor. Haiti was already in the middle of Kanaval and we dove right in. We dropped off my luggage at the house of a friend of Max and went downtown to the main square, Champ Mars. I did not recognize any of the landmarks. Viewing stands had been erected creating a new street winding across the square. People were milling about, starting to find their places for the evening parade.

We had lunch at a little restaurant hidden behind the stands. A little later we met up with several students and Vital Gerard, another professor. We passed a temporary Aids awareness center, which gave free Aids tests and handed out Aids information and free condoms during the Kanaval.

Max got us all invited onto a viewing stand sponsored by his friend's radio station, Radio Ginen. That is where we passed the evening, watching a never-ending parade of very large truck floats. Each of these trucks carried a different band, all their equipment, HUGE speakers and many people. When a truck had passed us and the music of that band faded, another already appeared filling the air with a different sound. We danced and danced, as was everyone else on the stands as well as the thousands on the street below us.

Sometime after midnight we left (the parade kept going to the early morning hours), piled everybody into Amenold's small Jeep, picked up my luggage and headed for Fondwa to rest a little before driving on to Jacmel to spend Mardi Gras day there. We spend the morning fairly hung-over on a beach outside Jacmel, where we slept some more, had lobster for lunch and a few more Prestiges, Haiti's excellent beer. By late afternoon we drove into Jacmel, positioned us in a bar on the parade route and took in the much more relaxed village version of Kanaval.

After we recovered from all this I taught the last class of the business plan course and then gave the introduction to the next course: project management. This course would take us to the end of the school year in July, when the first group of students would graduate from the University of Fondwa.

On Friday I participated in a joint board meeting of APF, the Peasant Association of Fondwa and PIP, Partners in Progress, the main sponsor of APF and UNIF. The meeting was called to air differences that had arisen over time. I was somewhat caught in the middle, as I was a board member of another sponsoring organization in the US as well as a teacher at the University.

The next morning I rode together with the PIP Board on the back of the APF truck to the airport to return to Miami, carrying unforgettable memories.