

SHOE STORY
Petit Trou de Nippes, Haiti
Medical Mission Trip
January 2008

It was the last official day of clinic and I was checking my day bag for the usual essentials; hand sanitizer, bug spray, sweat rags, Kleenex, camera, note pad, pen, duct tape, lip gloss and a few other basics. My bag was already heavy so when I threw in a pair of tennis shoes, I stopped, thought, “Oh, duh, that’s not too smart”, and went to take them out. At that moment, I had the strangest, strongest sensation and the shoes went back in my bag. It was an urge I did not understand, but silently obeyed.

My dear friend and pottery instructor, Karan Chandler, had given me a bag of shoes to take to Haiti a week earlier. I stuffed them in my suitcase that I planned on leaving at the church in Petit Trou and noticed a very nice pair of stylish tennis shoes and I slipped them on just for kicks. Wow, they felt and looked great but in they went.

I hoisted my day bag over my shoulder and headed for the clinic and in the hustle of the day, forgot all about that fine pair of shoes. Kim, the PA I was working with called one of her last patients in for the day; a frail little lady who hobbled up the step to the altar and entered Kim’s little corner of the church. She quietly relayed her many ailments that included the familiar tales we had heard all week; arthritis pain, abdominal pain, reddened eyes, vaginitis. The list went on, her kind smile endured and I noticed a quiet beauty that was evident in so many Haitian faces. It was gratitude and relief all rolled into one. This was her one shot at talking to a doctor until the next medical mission trip a year later; her only chance of medication that would temporarily offer her some relief from the constant pain she must endure.

Kim was busy writing her ‘script’ and wearily asked if there was anything else.

Without speaking, this elegant little lady slipped off the old, worn slippers that sufficed as her shoes. The poorly fitting ‘shoes’ told the story of the many miles and days she traveled just for a few precious moments with a physician. Kim and I stared dumbfounded and speechless at the soles of her feet, covered with blisters from trekking the miles of paths with no shoes at all.

Without thinking, I reached into my bag and pulled out Karan’s tennis shoes. It was a moment right out of Cinderella as we slipped those shoes onto her feet. God could not have sized them more perfectly.

Her face is not distinct in my mind. I could never pick her out of a crowd but the look in her eyes as they filled with tears, the gentle smile and touch of her hand is embedded in my heart forever.

Kanna McGuire