

# A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

FOR seekers of the southern sun, Haiti has long sat in the shadows of the Caribbean. Tales of primitive conditions and the pistol politics of the late President François ("Papa Doc") Duvalier kept island-hopping Americans hopping elsewhere. Until recently, at least. With Haiti's government now in the relatively benign hands of Duvalier's son Jean-Claude, the island is becoming more popular. This week, in reportage and color pictures, TIME's Modern Living section provides a new and close look at Haiti, its people and its art.

"Haiti is still a land wrapped in mystery," says Contributing Editor Jack E. White, who wrote the story. "It needs to have the myths tried loose so that we can see the people and the reality inside." Though he has been a visitor to the Caribbean, White's ties to the region are also familial. His wife is descended from inhabitants of St. Kitts in the West Indies. His father, Jack E. White Sr., a professor of surgery at Howard University, visited Haiti last year as the new President Duvalier's guest to dedicate a cancer-treatment facility set up by Howard in Port-au-Prince.

"The rural areas of Haiti," White observes, "have a lot in common with the backwaters of the American rural South, my territory for two years as a reporter. Both areas are overwhelmingly black, poor and steeped in religion. In some places there is even a similarity between the folk religion and voodoo."

As with many stories involving travel to warm climes and friendly people, there was no shortage of willing reporters for the article. While Reporter-Researcher Nancy Newman gathered material on Haitian history and politics in New York, Senior Editor Leon Jaroff, who edited the story, visited the island's art galleries, marketplaces and beaches, and spent many hours walking through the slums of Port-au-Prince. Jerry Hannifin, a Washington-based correspondent with long experience in the Caribbean and Latin America, contributed reminiscences of his many visits to Haiti over the past 20 years.

Atlanta Bureau Chief Joseph Kane has covered Haitian happenings since the mid-1960s. He returned this month to report on the island's changes during the past two years. Among those changes was an improvement in Haiti's once primitive electrical system. "There was always the energy crisis; the lights flickered and then pooped out about dusk for a few hours," he recalls of the old days. "Now there are new generators; the blackout has become passé, and the power facilities are a symbol of national pride. A small thing, I thought, until I got back to Atlanta. An ice storm hit the following day, and in the affluent suburbs we had no power. While my kids huddled around the fireplace, I wrote part of my file by candlelight. It occurred to me that it was perhaps a voodoo god reminding me of the Haiti of old."

Ralph P. Davidson

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