A leap of faith took Bruce Johnson to Haiti on a 14 year journey of LEARNING the culture, TRAINING himself and the Haitian workers, and BUILDING projects that provide hope for a safer and more sustainable living environment.

“We come from two different cultures. We are different colors. Usually Americans pity us, and we sense it...we feel we are not being treated as equals. It’s different with Bruce. He challenged us.”

Pastor Michel Morisset
Founder & Director Eben-Ezer Mission

SUMMARY

LEARNING
Bruce’s 1st trip to Haiti in 2002 was to Eben-Ezer Mission in Gonaives, where he fell in love with the people and their culture. He returned several times over the next 7 years, working with the founder and native Haitian, Pastor Michel Morisset, primarily as a friend, advisor and technical consultant. Bruce and Michel traveled together in Haiti, the U.S., and France, speaking at conferences and events to raise funds for mission projects. Michel’s unique understanding of realistic rebuilding programs was critical for Bruce to LEARN how to live and work in the poorest country in the western hemisphere, in a foreign culture outside the security of the U.S.

A tour thru Port-au-Prince weeks after the earthquake allowed Bruce to see and smell the devastation, with bodies still buried in the rubble and hundreds of thousands of displaced people living in tent cities. It was sickening as well as motivating. He spent the next 6 months LEARNING, in conferences, seminars, and design charrettes, to get a better understanding of the problems and determine how to get involved with the recovery.

TRAINING
Bruce decided the best way to use his 40 years of architectural experience in the rebuilding was thru construction. He partnered with a Dominican mining engineer and a Canadian developer to start a for-profit, design-build company, Karivian, based in Haiti. Their goal was to build at a very large scale, low cost, indigenous, sustainable houses that maximize the use of local labor and materials. They personally financed the business, bought equipment, and hired and TRAINED Haitian workers and themselves.

BUILDING
Bruce and his partners were responsible for the design and construction of a variety of projects, creating hope for an improved and safer living environment and BUILDING the self-esteem that comes from steady employment. Bruce presented his designs to officials in Haiti, Trinidad, and the U.S. to raise interest and money. Some projects were built, some started but not finished, and as is too common in Haiti, many were unbuilt due to the constant chaotic political situation. Although frustrating, Bruce is convinced that architecture is a powerful force that can break the cycle of dependency and create positive change in lives of the less fortunate people in the world.