

Scalpel's Edge

A Year of Missionary Service

by Dani Cole, June 2010 Mission Team Member

After a year and a half of suburban Minnesota, jungle-free living, I was finally returning to Peru with a bustling mission team of twenty-two. However now, as a graduated high school senior preparing for her oh-so-close yet undecided future, I knew this trip had more riding on it than normal. This time, the main purpose for me personally wasn't for time with my family or other team members or even patient care itself. This time, it was me, my future, that depended on this trip. Obviously I knew this was not the focus of the whole team; yet it was a question constantly lingering in the back of my mind. Could this really be my future home?

Let me back up a bit and give some background. In early May, I, alongside millions of other seniors in the entire nation, had to decide where I was going

to spend the next four years of my life; namely college. Narrowing my list from twelve to even the final three schools was difficult enough. Yet adding to my dilemma was the fact that I had gotten wait-listed at my top choice school, meaning I wouldn't know if I had been accepted until as late as July. Consistent prayer and pleading with God, not to mention hours more of research, debating, countless pros and cons lists, seemed to be getting me nowhere much closer than undecided. In other words, I felt like I was going through all the right processes but feeling no more confident in one school over another. At the time, I was very frustrated, even at God, as I questioned why He wasn't making this decision crystal clear to me. If He wanted me to be somewhere in particular, why wasn't He disclosing this to me? Since I was earnestly

seeking to decipher what He wanted, why wasn't He rewarding my efforts with any answer?

Well, it was not until this June trip that I finally figured out why. It is because God was calling me to a different school than what I had been looking for, to attend as a teacher rather than a student. God was calling me to SAM Academy, a school for missionary kids funded by South America Mission, located in none other than Pucallpa, Peru.

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A Gift of Light, Hope and Surgery to Peru

Missionary Outreach in Pucallpa

by Melonie Robran, June 2010 Mission Team Member

When my husband Chad first became involved with the Scalpel at the Cross mission several years ago, I never realized the wonderful impact this would have on our family and those who know us. God is amazing and through Him so many things are possible. Often things just seem to “fall into place,” though it’s no accident as God certainly has a hand in it. Several projects have sprung off from our orthopaedic work in the jungle: a pregnancy crisis center established by our friends at SAM that we have begun to work with, Refugio De Esperanza which is an orphanage we have visited and brought food and donations to. This is also where Isaac has a lab where he and his wife work with prosthetics and fitting new limbs to amputees.

As a non-medical team member, I am always a bit uncertain about my impact to the mission and my role(s) during the trips. However, it is reinforced with each trip that we non-medical team members are a vital and important part of the overall mission. Even moreso now that there are other ministries we have begun work with. My role was to facilitate the distribution of our donations (clothing, toys, school supplies and toiletries, etc.) amongst the various outreach visits we had scheduled for this trip. That consisted of an Oansa Club in Pucallpa, crisis pregnancy center, Refugio de Esperanza (Refuge of Hope) as well as the many hospital days at both the Hospital Regionale de Pucallpa and the Hospital Amazonica.

The one I want to touch on specifically is the Oansa group visit. I had only heard about the development of this relationship since my last trip in 2007. Kevin, our printer and graphic designer for much of Scalpel at the Cross’ material is an Awana leader in Peru, Indiana. His club wanted to Adopt a Club, something U.S. clubs

can do with other clubs across the world. How fitting that the Peru Indiana club would adopt a club in Peru!

Enter Pastor Mario and his Oansa group in Pucallpa (Oansa is the Peruvian equivalent of Awana clubs in the U.S.). These Oansa clubs are “Leading Kids Worldwide to Know, Love and Serve Christ.” Awana helps churches and parents work together to develop spiritually strong children and youth who faithfully follow Jesus Christ. Their programs offer a proven approach for evangelizing and discipling kids in the church and community.

I am clearly no expert on this topic, and have only had a few connections to Awana, but the energy and enthusiasm of these kids is infectious! We were greeted this trip with a wonderful display of song and dance. Each Oansa group (sub-divided by age) got up together to sing and dance. We also heard them sing the Peruvian national anthem. Afterwards, it was fun and games outside on the playground where a circle had been chalked in the dirt. We were split into four teams with the kids. Each of us was to run around the circle, cut to the center and grab the liter bottle to win, or the bean bag beneath it to gain points for second place. You better believe they were keeping score! After several exhausting variations of games in the heat, we broke for dinner. We helped provide the meal by paying for the food. The kids from Scalpel’s team enjoyed helping serve the bowls of soup. We also handed out toothbrushes and toothpaste that were donated to the mission trip from Indiana and Minnesota.

My daughter Aliyah was one of those kids with the team helping to serve the meal and pass out the toothpaste and toothbrushes. The smile on her face was a joy to see. Some people back home in the States are surprised



A small gift of a toothbrush and toothpaste is enough to bring a smile in Peru.

that she has made this journey with us at such an early age. Her first trip she was at age three going on four, and this time at six years old. But we are encouraged by her response to the trip and all that she learns...just knowing that the world is much larger than her and that there are those without all the things we take for granted has broadened her understanding already. We hope we are able to continue mission trips like this with her every few years, and look forward to the day when our youngest will join us, too!

God’s love is amazing and they are learning first hand what it means to give and how rewarding that is. Subsequently the Peruvian children are learning that God is good and there is a better life out there if they believe and follow Christ! Praise be to God for the children whose eyes twinkle and shine with the love of the Lord! And thanks to Peter and Nancy Cole and Scalpel at the Cross for the opportunity to be a part of this with our kids!



Aliyah and Melonie Robran serving a hot chicken and rice dish to Oansa clubbers.

The Best and Worst Day of Surgery Call in my Career ***(and a Gift to South America Mission)*** *By Peter A. Cole, M.D., Founder, Scalpel At The Cross*

I was a 2nd year resident in Orthopaedic Surgery at Brown University's Rhode Island Hospital in Providence 18 years ago. I took trauma call every 3rd night as was typical of surgical residents in those days. Yes, the 120 hour work weeks were such a matter of fact, that no one ever gave it a thought. It wasn't right or wrong or excessive or even worth tracking, because that was just the way it was... 110, 130, whatever. The gruel was a right of passage and residents seemed to revel in the challenge, while boasting of nailing femurs and slinging plaster in forty hour stretches. Sure it got weary at times, but in a delirious sort of way; in fact, paradoxically, I am sure these circumstances created an allure for the residents who chose these surgical careers.

Spouses, essentially all wives at the time (1-2% of ortho residents were women), seemed equally geared up for residency. They knew what they were getting into and they certainly nurtured resources for such times: family, neighbors, church. I imagine it is kind of like this for military families, strong and self-sufficient moms. I can only think of two couples from residency that had to endure subsequent divorce. Both cases featured two physician couples. But Nancy and I truly loved our residency years—both of us. By the grace of God, we have a special interpretation of those times. This was a season of great endurance which drove a deeper faith in our Lord, demanded greater dependence on Jesus for daily strength, generated greater focus on mere

essentials during a time when I was paid far less than minimum wage. Despite the strain on organized church life, there is no question our walk with God was intimate and paramount. We marveled at this irony. Matthew 11:28-30 was truly our theme-passage! Nancy had many dear girlfriends from our little Berea PCA Church, who undoubtedly provided beyond measure. And I had three very significant friends from church, Bob, Jim and Ken, which God undoubtedly used to save the day without my even realizing... the gift of grace! Soul mates to survive the season! They were wonderful, faithful, friends who would endure my hours with work-arounds for weekly prayer and discipleship as well as various and sundry work outs. One of my angels, former pastor Bob Korljan, sits on our Scalpel At The Cross Board to this day.

Rhode Island residency days provided the fondest of memories and so many of our friendships endure. Our program had a closely knit group of residents that despite work hours found time to gather for autumn barbecues, intramural sports, and big football games. But I loved the winters, and in fact it was one of those famed New England nor'easters that was the culprit for the story which follows.

Nancy "my lovely wife," as she was (and still is) known, was very cute in December 1991 at 39 weeks pregnant, and was just as vivacious as ever. Freda, her mom, had flown to town from Saint Louis for the big show; in fact, so did my youngest brother Mark, up from Virginia.

This family recruitment certainly had to do with my training. No lamenting – you just had to do what you had to do to get it done – I was a surgery resident. We also had the most gracious next door friends in our little blue collar Narragansett Terrace seaside neighborhood – the Dearnleys, Petersons, Meehans, and Almeiras... beautiful people.

I was on call the night it happened. I guess there was a 33% chance of that had I rolled the dice, but it was a 100% by heaven's standards. Since the beginning of time God planned that I would be on call for a reason, "...having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will." (Ephesians 1:11) Nancy paged me about 5:00 p.m. on December 8, and told me she was having contractions five minutes apart. Freda was there making sure that she was safe and monitored, and I told her to page back when the contractions came in shorter intervals. An hour later, she paged me again. I quickly called back from Operating Room #4, and Freda said she thought it was time to roll, that contractions were about 3 minutes apart.

I had my beeper on, and there was a resident and medical student still around to help finish the case which was a tibial rodding. I ran to the parking lot, hopped in my blue Ford Bronco, and raced across town over the Seekonk River to our cozy Cape cottage. I opened the front door, and Nancy was curled up on the couch, her head in Freda's lap. Sweetie was wincing

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Left: Nancy and Peter Cole celebrate the birth of Danielle Christine Cole in 1991.



Right: Danielle this past summer observing her Dad, Peter in the OR.

Scalpel At The Cross

June 19-28, 2010 Mission Trip Report

Pucallpa, Peru

The June 2010 Scalpel At The Cross mission trip included 3 Orthopaedic Surgeons, 1 Nurse, a Peruvian doctor, and 10 support members. The team evaluated 41 patients in clinic and completed orthopaedic surgical procedures on 12 patients, we did clubfoot procedures on 6 patients and delivered 4 prostheses and repaired 5 prosthetics.

Orthopaedic (Age 5-72 years)

- Patient 1: Right Femur Fracture – SIGN Nail
- Patient 2: Left Clavicle Fracture – ORIF with Acumed Clavicle Plate & Screws
- Patient 3: Right Foot Open Fracture – I&D & Prep for Amputation
- Patient 4: Right Humeral Shaft Fracture Non-union – Hardware Removal & Reconstruction ORIF
- Patient 5: Left Proximal 1/3 Tibia Fracture - Synthes External Fixation Claudi Frame
- Patient 6: Right Distal Tibia & Fibula Infected fracture non-union – Irrigation & Debridement Reconstruction ORIF with iliac crest bone grafting, Acumed Plates & Screws
- Patient 7: Right Distal Humerus Fracture Mal-Union – Osteotomy and Reconstruction with Plates & Screws
- Patient 8: Right Ankle Bi-Malleolar Fracture Mal-Union – Osteotomy & ORIF of lateral and medial malleoli with plate with screws
- Patient 9: Left Ring Finger contracture - Contracture Release
- Patient 10: Right Distal Humerus Fracture - Removal of Hardware
- Patient 11: Right Femur Fracture Partial-Union - Removal of Hardware
- Patient 12: Left Tibia Fracture Non-union – Irrigation & Debridement with insertion of antibiotic cement nail

Clubfoot Patients (Age 1-6 Years)

- Patient 1: Left Clubfoot - Began Ponsetti Casting Technique
- Patient 2: Bilateral Clubfoot - Continue with Ponsetti Casting Technique
- Patient 3: Bilateral Clubfoot - Continue with Ponsetti Casting Technique
- Patient 4: Left Clubfoot - Began Ponsetti Casting Technique
- Patient 5: Left Clubfoot, Tenectomy Performed – Continue with Ponsetti Casting Technique
- Patient 6: Left Clubfoot, Tenectomy Performed - Continue with Ponsetti Casting Technique

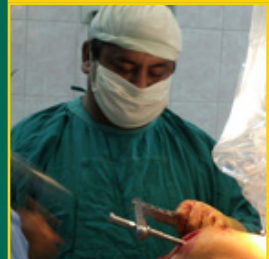
Prosthesis Patients (Age 25-73)

- Patient 1: Prosthesis Delivery
- Patient 2: Prosthesis Delivery
- Patient 3: Prosthesis Delivery
- Patient 4: Prosthesis Delivery
- Patient 5: Brace Fitting
- Patient 6: Prosthesis Repair
- Patient 7: Prosthesis Repair
- Patient 8: Prosthesis Repair
- Patient 9: Prosthesis Repair



Non-Medical Outreach

Our non-medical group volunteered their time visiting the Oansa Group, the children at Refugio de Esperanza, and the Pregnancy Center – Latindo de Esperanza. We took gifts of clothing, toys, toothbrushes, and paste. We played games and enjoyed spreading the word of the Lord to the children of Peru. We provided lunch and fun for both the Oansa Group and the children of Refugio de Esperanza on the day that we visited with them.



A Year of Missionary Service *(continued from page 3)*

You might wonder how I in fact come to the conclusion that God's plan for me was lying far away in the Amazon rainforest. In essence, it was a combination of God orchestrated "coincidences," guidance and inspiration through my parents, and the moving of the Holy Spirit. To describe it in brief, South America Mission, a.k.a. SAM, contacted its supporters in April of this year with a plea for prayer and support for their school this coming fall as they were lacking sufficient numbers of staff. Meanwhile in my college seeking process, I was trying to figure out a way to get off of my first choice school's wait list and into their freshmen class. The parallel situations, seemingly a coincidence to me, all of a sudden felt like God's direct Providence. Through the guidance and inspiration of my parents, I drafted and outlined a proposal for going to Peru for one year as a teacher and hospital aide. This experience would make me a more well-rounded, grounded, and cosmopolitan student. I also felt that this could take me leaps and bounds towards my ultimate goal of becoming a medical missionary later in my life. Yet throughout all this excitement and sorting out the possibilities, parts of me were still in question, still debating whether this crazy, "out there," maybe impulsive plan was really supposed to be a part of my future.

As June rolled around, high school completed, and graduation successful, our trip drew nearer and I still did not know where I was going to be living come this fall. In my small mind's scope of things, God had still not led me any closer to some sort of closure; or so I thought. But in fact, as we confident, egotistical humans usually are, I was wrong. I prayed hard that through some miracle on this trip, God would finally make His will apparent to me. And He certainly did in surprisingly ordinary yet profound ways. Through conversations with missionaries, through working with the team, through experiencing one more time this beautiful place I had grown to love through all these years, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart, and in fact with the crystal clarity I had been desiring. The one confirming moment was one evening when I spoke with the SAM school director and she looked me in the eye and told me, "You might possibly be our necessary provision, the gift that God has provided for us." To me, I heard God saying, "Dani, my child, you are my provision for these people, for this school." And I've been preparing for this coming ten month period in Pucallpa, Peru, ever since that moment.

God moved in me, guiding my footsteps along the path He so chose. Needless to say, this was by far the scariest decision I have ever made, with fear manifesting itself almost immediately.

Prayer & Praise Points

We thank God for His very tangible presence during all of our team trips to Peru in January, June, and September of this year. The blood of Christ thoroughly blanketed us from harm's way during multiple legs and means of travel, and kept serious illness from threatening our ability to serve as we hoped. In spite of transportation strikes and road closures within the country, some brief power and water outages at home base, and a few episodes of relatively minor GI distress, all team members emerged from their experience with Team Scalpel with greater vision and heart for global missions as well as personal faith enrichment and a God fearing dependency. Our "El Shaddai" met us each at the point of our personal need for Him with a powerful All-Sufficient Grace.

We are pleased to have established a strong follow-up database for each patient we serve, and are encouraged by the patients themselves who truly seem touched by the love of Christ through our team members' efforts to assist them medically. We have furthered our work towards the establishment of an orthotics/prosthetics "sister-ministry," and are hopeful that God will continue to grow this grass-roots initiative.

Looking ahead to our trip "south" in February of 2011, we are resting in God's providential means of selecting just the right team members and focus. With recent success in preparing surgical supplies for smooth transport to and within Peru, we are eager to continue co-laboring with other non-profit mission organizations who are designed for "supplying" our orthopaedic needs in this realm.

Now to Him who is able to keep us from stumbling and/or fretting about Scalpel's operation and day to day sustenance, we humbly submit that we feel frail in this regard and must continuously draw nourishment from the well of Living Water. We admittedly walk more comfortably by sight, until our faith becomes our eyes. Toward that end, please pray that God will provide us with financial encouragement as long as He finds favor with the work of our hands.



The Best and Worst Day *(continued from Page 1)*

and groaning out loud. Wow! We placed a blanket around her, grabbed the hospital overnight bag, and helped her into the cold night and propped her in the front seat of the Bronco for the ride to the hospital. In between contractions she would perk up with a thought or two. Nancy agreed in between these contractions, to detour by Bill and Judy Heaton's house to pick up their video camera so I could record the momentous occasion. It was about a ten minute detour, but seemed well worth the time. We made the video pickup and sped off waving to our excited friends. It seems that I recall that Nancy was in a constant scream mode by the time we arrived at Woman and Infants Hospital about 9:30 p.m.

An attendant ran out to us, and we slid her into a wheelchair and raced her to the front check-in desk ahead of other moaners already in line waiting. The question, "May I have your insurance card mam..." was met with a long high pitched screech while Nancy crumpled in her chair. "Let's get her back now" some head nurse said, and we flung around the corner into a darkly lit room where a couple aides helped change Nancy into a gown. The intensity was high as I reached into the bag to get the video set. One of the larger nurses performed an exam on my thrashing wife. The nurse immediately yelled, "Get the doctor! Full crown! Baby's here! No anesthesia this time!" I put down the camera and assumed the position having a vast experience from my OB rotation in medical school—wink wink. Each nurse took a leg to lithotomy and with a burst of fluid, the head flung into my hands. I was holding my child's head, eyes closed, dark fine hair wet to the scalp, and the OB crashed through the door pulling on gloves, and began giving Nancy instructions loudly, but not louder than the wail of childbirth. "Come on honey, one more big push!" And at that the baby sprung forth to join the party. It was 20 minutes from the time we got to the parking lot. I got some footage. This was going to be one special child!

The suspense was the best ever, before or since. "She's a girl!" the OB exclaimed. I cried with pride knowing I had my very own princess. She was beautiful, and

within a few seconds began to squeal as she pinked up while the nurse took the baby girl over to an incubator to clean her up, "Apgar 10!" I was immensely proud of Nancy who was now simultaneously smiling and crying, baby in arms, and I was overwhelmed with the new miracle in my life--Danielle Christine Cole.

We began to make phone calls. Choked up, I would proclaim the news, "You are now the grandparent of a beautiful baby girl, Danielle Christine Cole!" My eyes are welling up as I write eighteen years later. Within an hour we finished calls, and I comforted my bride to sleep. The nurse whispered, "Time to go up to the nursery." I followed her up to a well lit room full of incubators while I watched through the window. She settled our baby into the warm see-through container, placed a pink name band around Danielle's ankle, and a tiny blanket to swaddle her body. The nurse came out to congratulate me and tell me how gorgeous and peaceful our baby was.

I remained looking through the window for about five minutes until my beeper went off. That's right. I forgot. I was on call! I laughed out loud at God's timing. It was about 12:30 a.m. now, and I ran to the elevator and down to our room to kiss Nancy good night before heading back to Rhode Island Hospital across the street. **I remember vividly thinking, this was the best night to be on call, because I was so excited that I never would have slept anyway!** Hallelujah! I spent the night in the hospital ward and emergency room telling all the patients and nurses my great news! I finished morning rounds about 8:00 a.m. and headed back over to Woman and Infants to see Nancy and Danielle.

One night about eighteen and a half years later was heavy, dark... long. I was up and down several times checking her bedroom to see if she was home safely. I selfishly wanted those last days for us, but every kid in town it seemed wanted their own goodbye with my Dani princess. She was a woman now and needed to make her own choices about such things. There seemed little purpose in imposing curfews on a child who would live on her own in the Amazon jungle within a couple

days. Restless and anxious, I rolled over to tell Nancy that Dani needed to get some sleep and maybe we should text her. Nancy acquiesced having felt good about the excuse to execute this task, and I rolled back to sleep. At 1:00 a.m. I awoke again and went to Dani's room... not there. I walked downstairs in the dark and paused at the bottom. I sat down on the last step to pray, "Please hold her close dear God... please bring her home." I arose and walked through silence to the mudroom so I could peak out to the driveway. As I approached I heard whispers and giggles, and looked into the mudroom to find Casey and Dani chattering last goodbyes. I was simultaneously relieved and frustrated, until they discovered my presence. "Hi dad!" "Hi Mr. Cole!" "Uhhhhh, hi sweetie. You need to get some sleep." "I'll be up shortly... thanks dad." At least I was able to go back to sleep, only to discover from Nancy at 7:00 a.m. that subsequent visits from Rachel, Steve, Casey, Jeremy, Amanda and others manifested in a little downstairs bon-voyage party until 4:00 a.m. What's going on with parents these days I wondered!

I took off the morning from work on that dreadful Tuesday, August 10. We were actually up at 6:30 a.m. readying ourselves to take Danielle to the airport. We awoke Peter and Channing to go with us of course. Everyone was quiet—didn't need to say a whole lot. We all knew that we were going through the same thing. Very matter of fact, "Can I take your suitcase Dani? Do you have your passport? Do you have your pictures and teddy-Cassy packed?" I knew she only had a couple hours of sleep, but she was wide awake, all business, ready to go.

You see, Danielle decided to defer her acceptance to college in Boston in order to spend a year teaching at a little mission school in the Peruvian Amazon, in Pucallpa, the home of Scalpel At The Cross. The pride we had in our daughter is beyond description. Just a high school kid, choosing to go to an isolated jungle town on another continent for a year. I didn't know if the term princess quite fit anymore! Frankly, Brave Heart seemed more fitting at this point. She was following her Jesus, just as she had

Update on Dani:

Danielle is serving for a year as a teacher at SAM Academy in Pucallpa, Peru, approximately 50 miles from the Brazilian border. It is an impoverished, jungle, frontier town which is remote, and lacks law and order. Pucallpa is a desperate city in need of the Gospel. Now two months into her job, Dani is thriving in her position in which she fulfills various functions at this grade K-12 Academy of 30 primarily American missionary children. She is the Music Director for the students (Dani is an accomplished singer and plays guitar and piano); she leads a weekly devotion for the kids, a library skills class, and carries out various other "Teachers' Aid" responsibilities. She is cared for by wonderful people and loved by the students. Dani has a lovely roommate, Patricia, 24 years old, from Germany, who is a teacher at the school as well. They have a rustic, open air apartment inside the 3 acre school campus which borders a lumber mill on one side, and a refuge camp for abandoned, mentally and physically disabled people on the other side. She will return next summer to the U.S. to prepare for her next mission in Boston. We await her decision between BC and BU. Please keep Dani in your prayers.

My daughter, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. Proverbs 3:21-23



Dani and Doctora Rosita Escudero de Vera take time for a photo in September.

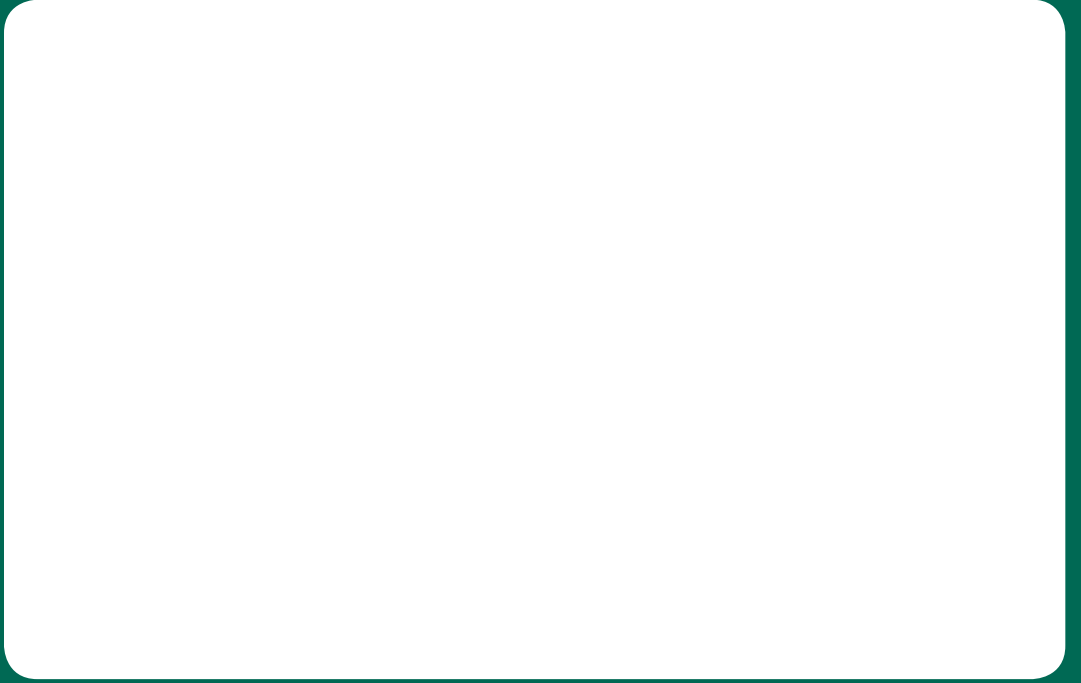
at Mounds View High. She was taking her mission to another home for a while. Nancy and I had a sense of peace in this. I derived courage thinking of the day she was baptized, and witnessing many other infant baptisms. On that beautiful Easter Sunday when Dani was a bouncing six-month old blonde, our Pastor Bob asked us the pointed question as he spilled water onto Dani's forehead, "Are you willing to give her over wholly to the Lord, even to the extent of supporting a call to a foreign land to pursue His purpose?" "We are." At this point I wondered if parents have any idea what they are responding to when they utter their affirmations. Not!... I mean not really. I never had a Tuesday packed with more raw emotion than this one. It became more tumultuous.

We needed two cars for the luggage and kids, and besides I needed to go to the hospital after the airport. I pulled my car out into the driveway and Dani followed out the front door. I believe she knew that I needed her more than mom on this occasion. I so wanted those last minutes with her. Channing hopped into the back seat quietly... he's never quiet. Nancy and Peter followed in Dani's black VW. Dani pulled out of her backpack some unfinished letters on notebook paper. She began intently to scribble down thoughts. Though I wanted to talk, I knew these were important notes and I let her write with the radio softly playing. Channing said nothing. He looked out the window. We approached the airport twenty minutes later and I reminded Dani, "Almost here sweetie." She finished up her project and folded each note into a carefully sculpted figurine-like gift, and labeled each, Mom & Dad, Peter, Channing. I gulped. We got out of the car to drop Dani and the boys with bags at curbside so they could check in. I circled to park the car so I could go in. My palms were sweaty and my memories were racing. I whipped through the process to head into the terminal. We were late, so had to scoot Dani into the security check

line. Waves of emotion came over me, and I ducked under the cordon to put my arm around her. I didn't want her to walk alone. I hugged her tight and told her I was so proud. I couldn't get too many words out. I clutched her more tightly as the line progressed. Peter and Channing and mom followed until the very last point at which we needed to exit the line, each taking turns hugging Sissie, crying... I love you's. Mom gave her a courageous farewell hug and parting words of deep affection. Tears were pouring down my face. All of the sudden I remembered as I went to hug Dani one last time. I whispered into her ear, "I was on call the night you were born, and I am on call again today." My vivid memory of the night at Woman and Infants Hospital tidal waved in my mind. I cried and let go. Dani also cried unconsolably, "I love you dad, I'll be OK." I never knew such sweet sadness. We stood until she disappeared waving into the terminal. I could see her tears across the crowd. We all turned, saying nothing, walking slowly, trying to see through wet eyes, back to the car. Eighteen years was over... done!

I spent the longest day in the hospital of my entire life that day and night. I operated on four patients that Tuesday, had to teach residents, answer to administrators, give guidance, and answer my freaking beeper every time it sounded into the night until I went home and crashed about 11:00 p.m. My answers were short, explanations brief, I was emotionally waxed. I didn't bother trying to explain to anyone. I was in no mood to explain to people who had no clue how I felt. I was disappointed to get home and hear we hadn't heard from Dani. It was absolutely the worst day and night of call since I first carried a beeper in 1991....and I have had some bad nights on call. The saving grace of this terrible day was receiving a long distance call from Lima, Peru, at 1:30 a.m. that night. I woke up and picked up the phone, "Hi Dad. I made it!" Relief... warmth... peace, and grace once again.

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A Christian Medical Mission to the Peruvian Amazon