

# SCALPEL'S EDGE

*Scalpel* AT THE CROSS  
A Christian Medical Mission  
to the Peruvian Amazon

A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

SUMMER 2015 | ISSUE 17



10  
YEARS  
OF  
SCALPEL  
AT THE  
CROSS

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# TEN YEAR REFLECTIONS

Peter A. Cole, MD, President and Co-Founder



With this new edition of Scalpel's Edge, we roll out a refreshing look and feel for the ministry. The "new warmth" reaches across our paper and electronic media, and ties together our functions, form, and family, as we strive to maintain the tones of the Amazon while providing a new Edge to the blade of the Scalpel. We strive to maintain the intimacy of our ministry, while reflecting its greater influence. We want all of this and our Commemorative 10th Year Edition, to be a gift to you, and a thank you for contributing in your own way, small or big. I regard it as eternally significant. With this first article, I would like to describe what I think is most notable about the first decade of a humble project, grow your confidence in the struc-

ture, people, and process of Scalpel At The Cross, and take you to a new place of faith based on what you might witness in the lines to follow. I have often said, "We are a humble family mission project based on a short history and love for the people in a remote slice of Earth known as the Peruvian Amazon; there is no personal ambition to be more than that. My goal is simply to follow God's lead, not to become grand!" Getting large was never the goal, and it still is not after 10 years.

Our scope has changed, however. There are more leaders now; God has added allies from His Church; the Spirit blooms passionate teammates; God penetrates our souls with grace; He deploys gifts previously undiscovered; the

family has grown up and out; faith emboldens, resolve fortifies, and dreams soar. Scalpel At The Cross is a completely different ministry 10 years later. This realization startles me. In a blink, the mission has influence: it employs people, impacts universities, creates new families, rivets a city, rearranges careers, transforms hospitals, ignites flames of passion, and flips eternity 180° for countless souls.

Ten years ago when Nancy and I established the ministry, a few friends crafted a Mission and Vision. It is the right time now to assess how we have done. Let me start by restating these Mission and Vision Statements written a decade ago on the wings of a dream.

## MISSION STATEMENT

*To be a lighthouse for Christ through a medical ministry in the Peruvian Amazon.*

## THE VISION

Scalpel At The Cross will accomplish this Mission by:

- *Building a medical mission camp, which serves the orthopaedic needs of Pucallpa Peruvians, tribal populations, and the missionaries who serve them.*
- *Staffing such a camp with full time Peruvian and part time North American health care professionals.*
- *Serving as a lighthouse for Christ and a magnifying glass to God.*

## OUR MOTTO

*A gift of light, hope, and surgery to Peru.*

This 10-year version of Scalpel's Edge in your hands is our 17th edition, and is a Commemorative Edition, which will travel to a thousand households! I recall "yesterday," when we had piles left over after printing a hundred for its maiden voyage! In its pages I hope you will discover evidence for the conclusion that I have drawn after this reflection, that the Lord has not only fulfilled the original Mission and Vision, but has blown it out of the Amazon, and has exceeded our expectations to such an extent that it requires us to revise the vision for the next decade! It is startling how He answers prayer and responds to the desires and musings of His children. Let me take our Mission Statement

first, a lighthouse for Christ through a medical ministry. Scalpel At The Cross has been a light in the darkest reaches of the rainforest, the light of Matthew, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light....." Matt 4:16, "You are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill....." Matt 5: 14, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven..." Matt 5:16. What has happened in ten years is more than I imagined when I wrote the phrase, "Lighthouse for Christ...." Evidence abounds in these pages and is plain to see, life after changed team-member life, recovery after postoperative-recovery, touch after smile after hug after holding hands--we are a lighthouse for Christ and a magnifying glass to God, yet only by His grace and providence. I will quote a new friend of the Scalpel



# TEN YEAR REFLECTIONS

Continued from page 3

family, Luzmila Cahua Cruz from Lima, featured later in this issue, to express “lighthouse realization.” She said, “You all have changed my life because you taught me I can know Jesus. I knew about Jesus before, but now I know Jesus. I noticed when you all pray, you talk to God; when I hear a sermon at your church, it is so personal; and you all sing in church like you sing to Him. Jesus is now personal to me, and I am excited to live with Him and with you forever.” It is no coincidence that Luz means light in Spanish.

Let me take our Vision next. The ministry’s campus, on a jungle lagoon called Cashibo Cocha 25 kilometers outside the burgeoning frontier town of Pucallpa, was purchased in 2003; and the campus began to evolve in 2004, when the Jungle Bunks guest lodge was built to host medical teams of twelve people. The first mission team descended on its bunks and hammocks in January 2005, which we designate as the starting point of the medical ministry. Since that time, there are thousands of Pucallpan Peruvians, hundreds of native Indians from various tribes, and dozens of missionaries, who have been evaluated, treated and impacted by our teams. We just completed our 23rd tour to the jungle, some which included a stint in the capital city of Lima or Cessna jaunts to riverbanks of remote tributary villages. The campus continued to expand in 2007 with the building of clinic and warehouse space, as well as overflow housing and a meeting hall. The two primary buildings were bridged by a 300 meter boardwalk in 2007, traversing swamp and thicket, while tying together functions and activities with greater efficiency. In 2007 the ministry hired Doctora Rosa Escudero of Lima, Peru, to facilitate trips and teams, run the patient follow-up program, and serve as a liaison between Scalpel At The Cross stateside leadership, local hospitals, surrounding churches, and ally ministries. In the United States we



employ a Mission Director and Coordinator, while the rest of the ministry runs on the hearts and hands of hundreds of volunteers, perhaps a dozen who play crucial roles and provide countless hours of joyful sacrifice. This accounting is very humbling to me. Our vision has not only been fulfilled, but is logging many miles over years now on the track of ministry.

Our basic model is to take teams of

10-20 members, mostly from the United States, to Pucallpa, to evaluate patients with orthopaedic conditions, many which necessitate surgery. At least a third of each team will not have medical backgrounds. Though we have facilities to evaluate patients and host teams, the surgeries are performed at one of two local government hospitals with which we have built relationships. The conditions are austere, but provide an adequate operating environment. A



typical trip includes a couple days on either end traveling in and out of the jungle, a couple days for patient evaluation, and a few days for operating. In recent years, about a hundred patients are evaluated per trip, 25 operations performed, and a number of conditions treated with non-surgical interventions like casting, injections, or non-operative recommendations. Operations are generally extensive and technically demanding, even by North American standards. Recent years have included 3-4 trips with the goal of one per quarter. All team members travel with medical and surgical supplies, keeping our treatment needs replete with options.

It is intentional that we work with the personnel in the local hospitals, including nursing, anesthesia, and surgeons, allowing us to mingle, educate, and forge lasting relationships. Our model is intentionally NOT to take over a local hospital, nor to have our own facility to manage all aspects of care from A-Z. It is through co-laboring that we see the greatest value in our model manifested.

To remain accountable to you, our donors and supporters, we track and regularly report the following metrics: value of donated professional hours, dollar value of donated equipment, patients evaluated, number of operations.

These metrics result in a total estimated medical value to the people we serve, and a basis for return on dollars spent administratively. We are always open to feedback on these methods. Despite the importance and value of tracking metrics, these numbers pale in comparison to the mountainous value of lives changed, patients returned to livelihood, and souls directed to heaven.

I have chosen to describe the five most significant strategic decisions of the past ten years, which I believe are responsible for much of the success experienced by the ministry, or which may prove to carry the most signifi-



# TEN YEAR REFLECTIONS

Continued from page 5

cance over time.  
**1. INVOLVEMENT OF MY FAMILY**

From the beginning, this effort has been a family adventure, which has made it sustainable and enjoyable for me. It never would have lasted were it not for buy-in from all members! Nancy and I first traveled to Peru the day after medical school finished in 1990 and made half a dozen trips before deciding to purchase a swath of land on which to launch a vision in 2003. We decided early that if we waited for the perfect time to begin such trips with children, we would wait a very long time. So the kids grew up traveling to the jungle, with Channing, our youngest, making his first adventure at the age of six months! These trips modified all our perspectives substantially, giving us the acute understanding of what it means to live in a top tenth socioeconomic percentile, giving us pause to reflect on what it means to want and to need, and redefining gratitude to a threshold of understanding that we don't deserve what we have, let alone the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the kids grew up around medicine in a hands-on environment that they could participate in. Danielle, Peter Jr., and Channing all have a great love for Scalpel At The Cross and for Peru, to an extent that they want to help carry on the legacy. Danielle (23) lived down at the ministry for one year between high school and college, while she taught at the missionary academy, and learned the Spanish language with fluency. She went on to choose nursing in part because she imagines a role with the ministry. Young Peter (21) chose medicine for the same reason, and is now in his junior year of premedical studies at college. And Channing (15) says he wishes to support Scalpel At The Cross with the money he makes as a professional athlete. Wow—we've got the transition covered! Most recently, Danielle joined the Board of Direc-



tors effective upon her graduation this May, and we couldn't be more pleased. Nancy has always been active on the Board, always supportive of my extensive travel, and leads both our Halo Ministries and Prayer Posse, which are pillars of great support to the mission at large.

**2. MISSION DIRECTORS**

I have been blessed to work with two stellar Mission Directors over the past nine years. Lisa K. Schroder was hired to lead the ministry administratively back in 2006. I regard my professional relationship with this faith-filled woman as perhaps the most influential of my career. Lisa is a relentless worker; she is passionate and principled; her tenacity is fierce; and she has the self-confidence to take on big risk! She is most tangibly responsible for catapulting Scalpel At The Cross to new heights each year. Most notably, she forged the strategic relationship with Dra. Rosa



Escudero who serves as our Peruvian Field Director, became fluent in Spanish from zero vocab in less than three years, logged the most miles of any team member since 2006, and raised the capital for the major 2007 campus expansion.

Lisa handed off the baton to Peggy Gasior, our new Mission Director, January 1st of 2014. Peggy is a fun-loving

dear of a person who warms the heart of everyone in her presence. She is passionate about ministry, particularly to young people, young adults, and of course most recently to medicine, which was a longstanding dream of hers since her undergraduate years. She is highly creative and in touch with progressive ministry models. She burns both ends of a candle with more grace than should be allowed! In her short tenure, she helped lead the first college-aged team to the jungle last year, revamped the whole face of the ministry through our printed materials and social media, connected us to a wellspring of support in other organizations, and led several trips to the Amazon already. Peggy has also doled out more hugs than all previous Scalpel personnel combined in her short year with the ministry!

**3. SURGICAL OUTCOMES PROGRAM**

Surgery is risky business. Upon graduation from medical school, I took the Hippocratic Oath as a new physician, in which I vowed, "Primum non nocere." First, do no harm to my patients. In order to know whether you are "doing no harm," you have to know what you are doing in the first place. Since the first surgical campaigns in the jungle, I was acutely sensitive to the fact that I would promote responsible follow-up of patients in the form of "patient outcomes" here in the U.S., yet would leave the jungle, trip after trip, with little or no follow-up on my patients in Peru. In 2007 I decided to change this double standard and hired a full time Peruvian Field Director, Dra. Rosa Escudero, trained in general surgery, to follow all operated patients. We are in the process of publishing our results of this important program, which we believe will be the first Outcomes Program established for short term surgical teams to developing countries. Dra. Escudero has done an outstanding job, achieving 81% follow-up of our patients, with an average of almost 4 postoperative visits per patient in the first year after surgery. We can attest (with our data) that our infection rates are low, at 2 %, and other complications very manageable. The formal manuscript will be

available to you in the future, as I feel this is groundbreaking work, which proves the concept, safety, and efficacy of our surgical ministry model.

**4. AMAZONICO HOSPITAL SHIFT**

Three years ago, two weeks before a surgical team departed for Peru, Hospital Regional, where I had operated for over ten years dating back to before our ministry began, closed its doors to our team because the hospital was overwhelmed with cases of Dengue Fever. Other politics were involved as well. At the time, I was very grateful that we had begun to foster relations a few years earlier at a second government hospital in town, Hospital Amazonico, even doing some operations with their surgeons as an olive branch for all we were doing across town. What seemed like a catastrophic decision by Hospital Regional administration two weeks before we were to land with 18 team members, turned out to be a stroke of God's hand which would accelerate our medical activities by magnitudes.

Amazonico rolled out the red carpet, as though they had coveted our involvement for years. They were fabulous with every phase of the medical campaign, including providing personnel around the clock, beds for patients, two rooms in which to operate all day, and an abundance of love and gratitude. To this day, we have accomplished robust surgical trips with incalculable support. In retrospect, it was fortuitous to have expanded our footprint in the town to include two major hospitals. We have since gone back to Regional, and have begun to restart activities at this hospital. "In our hearts, we plan our path, but the Lord guides our steps." (Prov. 16:9)!

**5. U.S. SCHOLARSHIP FOR MINI-FELLOWSHIP**

This year we experimented with a new educational model, which we believe may be transformative. Scalpel At The Cross sponsored a trip to the United States for a Peruvian medical student in training, who plans to pursue orthopaedic trauma in her career. She hopes



this will be in Pucallpa, Peru, working with her father, who is a loyal surgeon at the Amazonico Hospital where we have worked for three years. Luzmila Cahua Cruz was hosted by Christina M. Most, PA-C, my Physician Assistant, for five weeks in the Twin Cities, while she accomplished a mini-fellowship at Regions Hospital where I base my practice. To say that her life was changed, personally and professionally, is an understatement. The model is featured later in this edition, but we have witnessed a ripple effect from this experience, which is already reverberating through Peru and Minnesota. We are grateful to Luzmila and her family, who stepped out in faith to allow us to do something extraordinary, if not unheard of in this part of Peru. A second such scholarship is being considered by Scalpel At The Cross now in the area of Physical Therapy.

One of the most important questions we should be asking, is, "What about the leadership for Scalpel At The Cross? How is it chosen and held accountable? What is its role and structure?" I have



# TEN YEAR REFLECTIONS

Continued from page 7

given this much thought and prayer. Early in the history of this ministry, Nancy and I decided that we needed to be surrounded by greater talent, managed with accountability, and led with a structure and context for decision making. We progressed to a close group of like-minded friends, until we established a formal Board of Directors in 2006, which has met approximately two times a year to guide the strategic decisions of the mission, commit to its fiscal health, and maintain the highest level of integrity. The specific passion and talent of each Board member is defined, and a commitment to meeting participation and to the fiscal health of the ministry is established. Furthermore, each member signs an attestation regarding a Profession of Faith as follows.

Beyond any other criteria, we believe that a credible profession of faith is paramount to participation at the Board level. Each Board Member must be able to express that they:

- i. Love Jesus Christ and proclaim Him to be their personal Savior.
- ii. Confess they are a sinner in need of the Savior Jesus, and can overcome sin no other way.
- iii. Demonstrate that God is Lord of their life by the fruit of their deeds and word.
- iv. Acknowledge that a belief in Christ is the only way to eternal heaven, and without it we are doomed to eternal hell.
- v. Believe the Bible to be inspired by God, the inerrant Word of God, and a manual for the life of the Christian worthy to be studied, both for the sake of knowing our Creator better and understanding how we should attempt to live.

Holding these beliefs, each Board



Member also believes that the greatest of God's commands includes glorifying Him with our lives and attempting to love all others, including our neighbors and enemies.

The members are currently participating in a collective study of the book, Knowing God, by J.I. Packer, which is lead by Bob Korljan, our senior Board member and pastor. There has been no attrition from The Board, and it has grown from 5 to 9 members since its inception. I am ever grateful to this group of individuals who have demonstrated great consistency and prayerful commitment through our first decade of growth.

I end my reflections by expressing great excitement for an imminent major decision, which will have manifold implications for the ministry here and abroad, as well as for the kingdom to which we strive. We recently hired our own missionary family, to live on the campus of Scalpel At The Cross in Pucallpa, providing us with a year-round local presence for the first time. Dan and Laurie Porch, with daughter Lyndi, are moving August 1, 2015. Dan has a background as a pastor, church planter and mission field director, while Laurie is a registered nurse by training. This missionary family has served for years in Africa, and they are now ready to commit to a fresh new vision for ministry in the Amazon... an unbelievable story which is told in a separate article by Dan himself in this same issue. There will now be on-going

relations with local support ministries, as well as with the hospital healthcare personnel, and far more robust support for patients' needs, inclusive of their connection to local churches where they will derive important practical and spiritual follow through in their total recovery toward health. This exciting development is nothing short of riveting and represents a leap of faith for the mission. For that, we would covet your prayers and financial support.

I have said many times that my greatest satisfaction is witnessing the "ripple effect" of the ministry. I wrote about this ripple effect in the 2012 Fall Scalpel's Edge, Issue #13, because the phenomenon moves me on an almost daily basis. It brings tears to my eyes to witness an individual from North America changed from the inside out. She tells her story back home, lives a changed life, and influences a family and workplace, which in turn influences families and workplaces, which in turn influences hospitals and businesses and neighborhoods, and which in turn will influence future generations. The same happens in South America with each patient encounter—lives are changed forever. This miracle has played out many times in ten years, as the waves from a stone landing in the middle of a lake roll quietly toward an ever expanding diameter of influence, until they splash on the shores and banks of peoples' lives. Each such story provides a new reflection in the lake, now ten years of them, miracles each.✝

## TESTIMONIAL VIGNETTES

# THE 1ST DECADE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN MEDICAL MINISTRY

By Lisa K. Schroder, Kelli A. Hooks, & G. Rosa Escudero de Vera

(Lisa) -- As a child growing up in the church, I thought uttering a phrase like this might be something that would get you into trouble... it sounds a bit like using the Lord's name in vain. Now I realize that only in God's Name and by His Power did we get this far, and the journey to shine His Light into the darkness has only just begun.

*"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony..." John 4:39 NIV*

Scripture teaches us the power of God's work through small numbers of faithful believers, stepping out to follow His will. God's Word compels us to press on in spite of our perceived limitations and resistance of the world and circumstances around us. Finally, it teaches that evangelism is quite simply testifying continuously to His amazing, miraculous works, especially those I have experienced personally. From minutia to magnificent, His work in our lives, in this world, in this age, gives hope to others and shines a light into the darkness for hearts to grasp and minds to seek to know Him more.

As the first Operational Team, called to "get the ministry off the ground," Dra. Rosa Escudero, Kelli Hooks, and I, have personally witnessed God's hand in this ministry's work during these formidable years. With these unembellished reflections, our hope is you will enjoy even a small glimpse of the excitement and passion we have for God's work in our lives, in this ministry, and in the world. He is Alive!

HOW  
"IN GOD'S  
NAME"  
DID WE  
GET THIS  
FAR?!







**Scalpel At The Cross** would like to extend our deepest thanks to family and friends who have supported our ministry so faithfully over the past 10 years. That support has come in the form of volunteer hours, shared gifts and talents, medical supply donations, financial donations, and much, much prayer. The medical care and ministry to the people of Peru has not been possible without each and every one of you!



#### ORGANIZATIONS

4Imprint (custom gifts)  
 AccuMed (orthopaedic instrumentation & implants)  
 AmeriCares Medical Outreach (medical supplies)  
 Blue Bell (medical cart donation)  
 Christian Women's Fellowship of First Christian Church, Rochester, IN  
 Covenant Presbyterian Church  
 Crosslink (medical supplies)  
 Didage (orthopaedic instrumentation & implants)  
 Exos (medical supplies)  
 FAME (medical supplies)  
 Global Health Ministries (medical supplies)  
 Hope for the City (medical supplies)  
 Lettermen Sports (t-shirts)  
 MAP Organization (sutures)  
 MDOrthopaedics (Ponsetti shoes)  
 MedShare (medical supplies)  
 MedWish International (medical supplies)  
 Patterson Dental (sterilizing products)  
 Project C.U.R.E. (Stryker Battery System)  
 Project Hope (medical supplies)  
 Rochester Orthopaedics (orthopaedic boots)  
 SIGN (orthopaedic instrumentation & implants)  
 Smith & Nephew (orthopaedic instrumentation & implants)  
 Stryker (orthopaedic instrumentation)  
 Surgical Power, Inc. (orthopaedic power, batteries & chargers)  
 Synthes (orthopaedic instrumentation & implants)  
 Your Practice Online (web & email hosting service)

#### PEOPLE

Linda Crimmins  
 Lisa Schroder family with special thanks to Lisa's mom, Linda Crimmins, administrative assistance

Kevin Emerson and Modern Graphics, photography, graphic design, & print materials

Tyler & Brenda Foss, maintenance of Jungle Bunks guest house and complex in Pucallpa

Kelli Hooks family, administrative assistance

Bernie Berry, building project

Patrick Berdoz, building project

Patrick White, SIGN Nail System

The SAMAir Family

#### STAFF

Lisa K. Schroder, Mission Director (2006-2013)

Peggy T. Gasior, Mission Director (2014-present)

Dra. Rosa Escudero, Peruvian Medical Director (2007-present)

Kelli A. Hooks, Mission Coordinator (2008-present)

#### BOARD

Peter A. Cole, M.D., President and Co-Founder

Nancy E. Cole, Director of Halo Ministries and Prayer Posse, Co-Founder

Robert R. Korljan, Chief Financial Officer

Chad L. Robran, US Field Director

Lisa K. Schroder, Development

Jason J. Caron, M.D., Director of Patient Care and E-Consults

Joel M. Molitor, Member

Peggy T. Gasior, COO and Mission Director

Danielle C. Cole, Member

#### ORIGINAL PRAYER POSSE

(now numbering approx 75)

Michael and Mandy Boyanton

Marla Cole

Lisa Harding

Sarah Molitor

Alan and Ruth Phillips

Melonie Robran

Clarke and Judy Ryder

Please note our new contact information and stay in touch with us!

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# THE 1ST DECADE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN MEDICAL MINISTRY

Continued from page 9



**(LISA) -- OCTOBER 2005 - OCTOBER 2006:  
LEAPS OF FAITH OR SIMPLY RIDING THE WAVE?**

From the moment the “offer” was made to join the mission (October 2005), to the first trip with a team (May 2006), to setting out on a solo voyage to the jungle to learn more about running medical campaigns (October 2006), it felt simply as if I was being propelled along atop a powerful wave, and one I really didn’t feel prepared to surf! God is so incredibly good to have brought me to the place where I could experience His work and faithfulness in my own life, even as I thought I was setting out to help others.

**(DRA. ROSA) -- JUNE 2007:  
A MONKEY BITE FORMS A BOND**

A group of kids on our team, including Danielle Cole, went to visit a friend’s rescued monkey, which had essentially become like a household pet (not uncommon in the jungle!). Unexpectedly, the monkey bit Dani, creating the need for an emergency trip to Lima for treatment (rabies vaccine and antibiotics). I needed to go to Lima with Dani and her mother, Nancy. I decided we should go to a clinic where I had worked previously, hoping Dani could have greater access and faster attention. Only through God’s help was I so easily able to arrange airline tickets, clinic visits, and the necessary treatment. And Nancy, Dani and I truly got to know one another during this “trial.” We had a wonderful time together talking, sharing, and walking together calmly in our faith in God, forming a lasting bond.



**(DRA. ROSA) -- APRIL 2009:  
ACCIDENTS, IMPASSES, & DIVINE PASSAGES**

On an early Saturday morning, Dr. Cole and I were headed to the hospital for one final post-operative visit of our campaign patients. We waited for a break in the maze of oncoming traffic to make a left turn. As we made a quick move to catch our chance, a moto-taxi suddenly came from behind passing on the left... a fairly common maneuver by the aggressive moto drivers. CRASH! Unfortunately, the moto-taxi slammed into the front side of the truck, spilling its driver and passengers onto the street. In a matter of seconds, as Dr. Cole and I exited the truck to assess the injuries, an angry crowd formed around the collided vehicles. (Unfortunately, an American driver will be automatically targeted as the cause of the accident in this situation.) It was miraculous how God worked to protect us in this situation, to move the police to allow us to prioritize the injuries of the passengers and transport them to the hospital, and to make the driver himself turn truthful regarding the cause of the accident and advocate for the police to not harass us as visitors in this city. Nothing short of a series of acts of God brought the right people to the right place, at the right time to treat the patients quickly, and to resolve the situation without typical legal and judicial battles. The injuries of the driver and passengers were treated by our friends and colleagues at the hospital; and I have been able to follow them to full recovery. Praise God for His protection and provision of safe passage!



**(KELLI) -- SEPTEMBER 2010:  
MY WAY OR GOD’S WAY**

When I started with the mission in 2008, I made it clear that I would not, could not, and definitely did not want to travel to the jungles of Peru! I was passionate to serve the mission and work for the Lord, as long as I could do it from the “safety” of my office at home. It took God 2 years to change my mind, or rather, to fulfill HIS PLAN, which was for me to go! It was by far the most rewarding experience of my life, and it taught me once again that our plans are not always fulfilled, but HIS plan always is!



**(DRA. ROSA) -- JULY 2011:  
HOPE IGNITED**

A local traumatologist in Pucallpa talked with me about a difficult case concerning a young mother who was about to undergo an amputation. The patient had 3 prior surgeries following a terrible moto-taxi accident, which left her broken femur (thigh bone) mangled and unhealed. The surgeon asked if there was anything the mission could do. When I first visited the house of the patient it was a very hard experience; she cried and said that GOD does not exist, that her life was bad, and that people are only bad. I asked her allow the next Scalpel team to review her case and make recommendations for the possibility of assistance. I prayed for her and told her, “You need to accept the love GOD has for you.” When the team reviewed her case, they planned an additional surgery to stabilize the broken bone and to try to heal her femur. When surgery day arrived, I prayed with her and encouraged her regarding God’s love and the gospel of Christ, and she accepted Christ into her heart! Today, Erika is a Christian and evangelist, helping others by sharing her testimony with those who have lost hope.

**(KELLI) -- OCTOBER 2011:  
STOLEN PASSPORTS BUT GOD’S WILL PREVAILS!**

Prior to departing for this trip, we learned that our Peruvian housekeeper, Durbia, was critically ill and in the hospital in Lima. Upon arriving in Lima, the team received an update that Durbia was in desperate need of a blood transfusion. Unlike in the US, there is no supply system for blood; the family and friends of the patient are required to give, in order for the patient to receive. Without hesitation our team members determined to go to the hospital and donate! In order to donate, passports were required for verification, so Lisa collected all passports. Following an initial screening, the team was told to go get a light lunch and return for donation. While at lunch, the backpack with all the passports was stolen! I will never forget that call and the problems and concern this created for the team: 1) to give the blood donation for Durbia, 2) to travel on to Pucallpa for the surgical campaign, and 3) to travel home to the USA at the end of the week! Amazingly, through the grace of God, the team was able to still donate blood (Durbia is alive and well today); they were able to travel to Pucallpa; and, upon returning to Lima, were able to obtain temporary passports to arrive home on schedule. Once again, obstacles were set to stop the generosity of this team, but God, who is bigger than any obstacle we might face, intervened and showed that with Him everything can and will be accomplished.





# THE 1ST DECADE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN MEDICAL MINISTRY

Continued from page 13



**(DRA. ROSA) -- JULY 2012:  
TRAGEDY AND TURNING POINTS; IN MEMORY OF DR. LUIS BASAGOITIA**

I first visited Hospital Amazonico in 2010, seeking to learn more information about the other government hospital in Pucallpa. There I met Dr. Basagoitia, the young traumatologist, who had just been appointed as Director of the Hospital. Together we started considering ideas for projects or opportunities for Scalpel to work with them. In July 2012, while visiting another town in Peru, Huancayo, I saw Dr. Basagoitia in the airport! Again, we talked, and he insisted that I visit his hospital and hoped I could return with my team. Tragedy struck, however, in August 2012 when an airplane carrying government officials from Pucallpa crashed and killed its pilots and passengers, including Dr. Basagoitia. When I received the news I felt so sad for his wife and daughters, but was appreciative that I was able to talk with her and support the family. I thought the connection for Scalpel to work with this hospital might be closed, but now I understand that all things work together in the timing of GOD, rather than in my own. Dr. Basagoitia left a legacy because Scalpel has been able to hold very successful campaigns in Hospital Amazonico over the past few years. Our teams receive excellent support and have wonderful relationships with the new directors, Dra. Elena Alban and Dr. Romero, as well as with the entire staff of the hospital. GOD opens all the doors for the mission of Scalpel to continue to grow in Pucallpa.

**(KELLI) -- JANUARY 2013:  
FEVER, FEAR, FAITH, AND FORTITUDE**

Just two weeks prior to the team’s scheduled departure, we learned that Hospital Regional was cancelling our surgical campaign due to the onslaught of dengue fever patients. This of course, seemed alarming on many levels for our work in Peru. Without access to operating rooms, our medical ministry would be shut down. Pushing forward in faith, we moved ahead with our preparations for departure on the scheduled date, and, as always, God opened new doors at Hospital Amazonico for us to continue serving Him and the people of Pucallpa with our hands and hearts.



**(KELLI) -- OCTOBER 2014:  
LOGISTICAL ISSUES OR REFRESHER LESSONS?**

**Refresher #1:** For each trip, we must take with us disposable surgical gowns, booties, hats, etc. Recently, due to the Ebola issue, it has been a struggle to obtain sterile surgical gown donations for our team. Just ten days prior to our departure, I only had a handful of gowns, and I knew that it was not enough for a week’s campaign. I continued to pray and desperately trusted that God would help me find a source for gowns. Just a few days before departing, I received word from one of our donating organizations that they had received gowns and were able to supply our needs. Praise the Lord!



**Refresher #2:** It is not uncommon for flight issues to arise, as team members travel from all over the US to join together in Atlanta, GA to catch the connecting flight to Lima, Peru. On this particular trip, the greatest majority of our team members were all travelling from Asheville, North Carolina. Following takeoff, this flight turned around and returned to Asheville due to mechanical problems. There were, of course, further delays and confusion, which ensue whenever travel plans are unexpectedly altered. Would the team make their connection in time for the flight to Lima? There is only one flight from Atlanta to Lima each day, so I set to work, trying to determine all the options and possible domino effect if they were to miss the international flight. I was on the phone with the team, the airlines, and Lisa/Peggy in Atlanta. Miraculously, the team made it to Atlanta without any alterations in the travel plans, just in the nick of time for their flight to Lima. It’s all about FAITH. God will make all things possible!

**(LISA) -- JULY 2014 TO 2015 AND BEYOND:  
PEACE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING**

By July 2014, God had worked hard on me in leading 20 trips to the Jungle. As I have passed the baton to our new leader, Mrs. Peggy Gasior, I am compelled to testify not only to all of God’s past work, but also to His provision of peace and hope in the future. God is using this ministry to change lives; our own testimonies attest to this. His will is not to bring us to one place, but to keep us going on to the next. I am as excited to see how God might use me in a new way, just as I am excited to see how He uses the newest members and leaders of Scalpel At The Cross to take it into the next decade of servant-hood.



*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”  
Philippians 3:12 (NIV)*



**Can YOU please help?**  
You alone can sponsor an Amazon Hospital by purchasing a **SIGN Nail System**



Philanthropist and Orthopaedic Surgeon, Dr. Lew Zirkel, a friend of Dr. Cole’s, decided to pour his life into a foundation which develops FDA approved Rods to fix broken long bones for a fraction of the price of what it costs in America, and without the need for high tech X-ray to place them in patients. His organization, SIGN ([www.SIGNfracturecare.org](http://www.SIGNfracturecare.org)), helps to outfit hospitals throughout the developing world, giving surgeons an ability to transform lives by doing something that is otherwise impossible in these settings. We currently have one system we have used for 6 years now, and we have the patient outcomes program to attest to its success.

**We need two systems to continue meeting the growing demand we are facing in our two jungle hospitals. Please consider being a SIGN sponsor!**



**Appeal: Each SIGN Nail System costs 20K**

Each system gives us an inventory of 100 nails and all the instrumentation to place them.

Every nail placed is replaced for free!



# CHRIST'S RIPPLE EFFECT

by Tina Most



It's amazing to watch God's hand at work and feel as though you can see the direct result of His inspired action come to fruition in a short period of time. I'm sure this happens often without our realization, but in this instance, it was so "in my face" that it was impossible to overlook. It started with a smile...

After the disappointment of learning that Regional would not be able to host our team a few years back due to the overwhelming number of dengue cases, God opened a window. We felt the weight of a significant roadblock, but ended up being greeted by warm smiles and ushered into bright exam rooms as we began a relationship with Hospital Amazonico. I remember vividly trying to use what miniscule knowledge of Spanish I had to communicate with the doctors there, especially when placed next to one of them at dinner. Dr. Cahua was gracious and made jokes that bypassed the language barrier. I felt that we were "in this together;" working towards a cause, and that he appreciated our help.

The next trip, I had the privilege of meeting his daughters! Luzmila is in the medical program in Lima, and Angela is studying language. We had an immediate connection. It was Luzmila's unrestricted smile that let me know the size of her heart without a word.



She was welcoming and silly, focused on serving others, and excited to know us and about the work we were doing. She worked long hours that trip, doing anything and everything she could do to help us, including translating, running for instruments, assisting in surgery, and communicating between the Peruvian staff physicians and our physicians about patient care. It was obvious that she had a servant's heart coupled with a bright personality. How do people connect on such a deep level in a matter of days? To quote our director..."It's a God thing."

I was so sad to say goodbye for many months to this new friendship, so I half-jokingly made "subtle" hints about bringing Luz back to the states. Realistically I already knew she would be someone I could take in wholeheartedly. The unknown context of this story is that the board had been searching for an opportunity to train someone in the states who could go back to Peru to be a more permanent blessing to them in the area of medicine...and God provided that through my childlike connection with Luz. Scalpel was able to extend to her the offer of a one-month fellowship at Regions Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, and I had the privilege

of acting as her host. She faithfully came to the hospital with me each day, scrubbing into our cases, seeing patients in clinic, listening to daily lectures, asking lots of questions, and gaining an abundance of knowledge about trauma orthopaedics. In addition, this strong Peruvian took on our -25 degree weather like a champ! We took her ice skating, sightseeing at Minnehaha Falls, ice fishing...all kinds of crazy Minnesota activities; and she LOVED it! Luzmila brought much more joy into my life than I ever anticipated.

During her stay, she was able to observe more than medicine. She enjoyed the company of many strong Christians, attended church with the Porch family and with me, had dinner with the Coles, spent time with Annie Johnson and Karen Feigum (past Scalpel team members), and prayed with our friends. In the midst of all of our hard work, fun, and fellowship with these friends, we became very close, opening the door for very meaningful conversations. She asked me why Christianity is different than other religions. We discussed the motivation for the hope that we have and the importance this has in our lives. With each discussion, she was interested but quiet in her responses. The final week snuck up on us so quickly; I could not believe time went by so fast! Dr. Cole invited us for a lunch before she went back home; during this discussion, he asked her about her faith. She shared that since she was young, she questioned some teachings of the Catholic Church. She didn't understand some actions that did not seem heartfelt. Now, she felt her heart was full and she finally understood the reason to hope and the motivation for our love for one another. She spoke with such passion that she inspired me! The Holy Spirit had been at work through all of these interactions with God's faithful people. What an amazing gift from God!

## BUT HOW WOULD I GIVE HER BACK TO PUCALLPA?

When we flew back to the Amazon, she was an amazing asset to the campaign, ten-fold more than before. I was so

proud and impressed by the use of her new medical knowledge to help us care for the patients physically, as well as her renewed passion to help us care for their souls.

When saying our "goodbyes," I thanked Dr. Cahua for allowing Luz to come to live with me in Minnesota. He responded in a way that I didn't expect. He told me that Luz spoke with him about her newfound faith. She is so passionate about it that it came pour-

## AN ADVENTURE PROVIDED BY GOD

by Luzmila Cahua Cruz

A year ago, my dad told me about Scalpel At The Cross. I thought it was an interesting organization providing a good opportunity to learn new things and improve my English, but I did not think anything beyond that.

After being part of this amazing mission, I realized that God wanted to demonstrate to me that studying medicine was the best decision of my life, and more importantly, that my life was going to change forever!

In October of last year, while taking a test at the university, I received a phone call from my dad. Not knowing it was going to be the "best phone call" ever, I called him back as soon as I finished. He told me I was going to travel to Minnesota, under the sponsorship of Scalpel At The Cross and hospitality of Tina Most and Dr. Peter Cole, to participate in a fellowship in Orthopaedics at Regions Hospital. As expected, I was speechless and could not say a single word, something that is unusual for me. I pinched myself to prove I was not dreaming.

November and December flew by. Excited and curious for this new adventure provided by God, and wondering what He had to offer me over the next five weeks, I celebrated the New Year with my mom and my sister in the airport. I

ing out of her the first chance she had. And he now understands the joy in our hearts evidenced by the consistency and selflessness of the actions of our teams. Obviously God used all of this to have a significant impact on Luzmila's heart...and as a result, the heart of Dr. Cahua. Who knows the extent of this ripple effect! As has happened many times in my life, God orchestrated a far better plan than I could have fathomed.



finally arrived in Minnesota on January 1, 2015, and while picking up my suitcases I heard a familiar voice say, "Luzmila!". I turned around and could not believe it! Dr. Cole was welcoming me to Minnesota with open arms. I was really surprised because I was waiting for Tina. I met Danielle Cole who made me feel so welcome in just a few minutes! I also received a fun welcome to the US from Peter Jr. Tina was waiting outside the airport with a beautiful smile and the sweetest, most welcoming hug.

After days of huge expectations, the big day finally arrived. I was at Regions Hospital! Filled with excitement and happiness, I started my adventure. Regions Hospital is not just any kind of hospital or work environment, it is a place full with the most well-qualified and kind professionals you could ever meet. I have learned invaluable lessons, living day by day alongside the doctors, attending x-ray board educational meetings and conferences at the University of Minnesota, being introduced to an orthopaedic research lab, and being exposed to the OR, clinic, patient follow-up appointments, and most importantly, working with the

I am truly honored to be used as God's instrument to carry out His purpose. This was a powerful pathway, accomplishing the important job of educating someone who can be a light to the people of Peru both in their advanced surgical methods and also in their spiritual lives. I was able to witness a small part of what will affect a number of lives in Peru forever. In addition, He blessed me with an amazing new friend and sister in Christ.✝

team of Dr. Cole and his PA, Tina Most. Dr. Cole is "the man." Why? I admire the way he knows how to deal with almost any circumstance, and he has an awesome way of solving problems! With all his leadership responsibilities, at the end of the day he still has time for his lovely family, Nancy and Channing Cole.

Tina Most is one of the most dedicated, passionate, and professional PAs you could ever work with. But living with her for five weeks taught me to cherish her as a friend and a sister. Our days were amazing! Each day was a new adventure, with Minnehaha Falls, ice skating, ice fishing, "Crashed Ice", "Chaufa" and "Lomo saltado" experiences. We danced, cooked, worked out, played basketball, football and racquetball; and I learned new languages like German and Hmong. I also met and spent time with her family who are wonderful; her mom is one of the loveliest women I have had the opportunity to know.

This year was a new experience, and I



# AN ADVENTURE PROVIDED BY GOD

Continued from page 17

felt so blessed and thankful to God for letting me see friends I had made over the course of the last two campaigns. I also appreciated meeting so many new and unique people.

Being with the medical team of Scalpel At The Cross again back in Peru made me realize that I found what I was looking for all of my life! I now know Scalpel helps patients by releasing their pain, not just physically but also in terms of their hearts and souls.

Scalpel makes it possible for patients to be restored to health and to re-establish better quality of life, which gives them the opportunity to reintegrate into society with quiet self-confidence.

And what does Scalpel At The Cross receive in exchange for everything? Nothing more than the smiles on patients' faces that shows restored happiness and hope so they may live again with fewer limits and true



thanksgiving.

Through this experience, I have learned invaluable lessons and strengthened my relationship with God. I have begun to see that He surprises me and is revitalizing my love for medicine and patient care through Scalpel At The Cross.✝

## SERVING GOD SINCE 2 YEARS OLD

By Dan Porch

The room assigned for medical consultations was large and sparsely furnished as our Scalpel Team assessed the way forward for this first day of ministry in Peru. The warmth from both medical personnel and patients soon offset the spartan surroundings.

As this first day of decisions, prayer, and much listening to hard stories meandered to a close, the Lord spoke confirmation concerning a sense of being 'home.'



I was almost two years old the first time I set foot in the jungles of Peru. Entangled in mission life for 13 years as a child, a foundational understanding of purpose and culture began to flow into me, and this would provide a framework for the rest of my life. Through those early years in Peru, God shaped and refined me for a work he would later define.

Another 13 years would pass before the Lord led my wife, Laurie (a Wisconsin farm girl with a shared vision for cross-cultural ministry), and me into a career in church planting. We contemplated missions in South America and even explored the possibility of work in Peru. But in his wisdom, God led us to West Africa where for 18 years our family worked to see the church established.

Those were good years serving and growing up together as a family. Benjamin and Seth went over with us while Mitchell, Anna, and Lyndi came along during our African tenure. The first years were given to church planting among an unreached people group. Living in rural and under-developed areas, we pursued friendships, started Bible studies, fanned

the flames on a small church start, and lived as salt and light in an area that was primarily Muslim.

Laurie lived and vacillated between the roles of mom, home-school teacher, team nurse, guesthouse hostess, and missionary friend. It was not the kind of life that brought huge rewards, but to be there for the sake of the gospel brought courage to live and work.

Our last six years in Africa found us in a capital city with a lifestyle that was vastly different from the rural ways we had known. From this location we gave leadership to the work of the mission in four different countries. This oversight and vision-casting work allowed us to shepherd (pastor) and give guidance to over sixty missionaries serving in various contexts. It was a wonderful learning experience for us and reminded us that even missionaries need to be pointed back often to keeping the gospel at the center of our work. These years also gave our children an opportunity to be involved in a larger school situation.

During those years I would often joke with others concerning the Lord's sense of economy in taking us from a language and culture that was familiar (Spanish/Latin) ... to one that was completely new (French/African). But once again, God was way ahead of us, having prepared us for this ministry of church planting.

Our eventual move back to the states in 2009 allowed us to join and pastor with a new church plant in the urban context of Minneapolis, MN. The Lord used our love for people and those African years of ministry in a culturally different context to help us establish Jubilee Community Church.

It was during this time that Peter and Nancy Cole began to dream with Laurie and me about the possibility of serving the vision of Scalpel At The Cross as missionaries living on site in Pucallpa. The idea of a return to Peru made me laugh. Is this of you, Lord? We wondered. We prayed. We talked more with Peter and Nancy, with Peggy, Lisa, and others. And then we took an exploration trip with one of the teams to Peru. A

vision for shared ministry in which Laurie and I would use our relational gifts ... our cross-cultural abilities ... and our love for pointing people to Jesus came into better focus. Laurie's nursing skills, her love for hosting, our leadership and shepherding skills, and our years of building relationships in cross-cultural situations could be utilized in this jungle context to build a framework for the on-going work of Scalpel.

That ten-day mission trip opened our eyes to the possibility of harnessing the resources of the church family in Pucallpa with the engine of Scalpel's defined medical practice. By deepening relationships with the medical, missionary, and church communities, we would strengthen natural bridges that knit our medical teams and believers from the communities together to minister even more effectively through Scalpel At The Cross.

We are excited about joining a proven ministry team and at the same time being on the cutting edge of a new aspect of this ministry. The plan is to live in Pucallpa, caring for the facilities owned by Scalpel, and from there, hosting and shepherding the medical and non-medical teams coming to minister. Living on location, we hope to provide cultural insight to each trip that will provide a fuller experience and enhance our relationships with our co-workers in this great city. We will work alongside Dra. Rosa Escudero in the follow-up of patients. Additionally, we will grow the network of partnership relationships needed as we promote the worship of God through the gospel of Jesus in this Amazonian region.

I have learned over the years that our many questions to the Lord often receive a response as Peter received ... *You, follow me! (John 21:22)* I now hear those words from him as we approach this new role ... another transition for our family ... one that has a lot of unanswered questions still swirling in it. But the captivating vision of Scalpel is compelling, and the desire to be used of the Lord in Pucallpa to see this vision more fully implemented is exciting.



Partnership development was one of our first goals as we presented the vision of Scalpel At The Cross and sought to raise funding, prayer, and participation. We are excited to watch the Lord provide more partners for this ministry in Pucallpa. Be in prayer with us and spread the word concerning this ministry to others who you believe might desire to climb on board with us in this vision to be a lighthouse for Christ through a medical ministry in the Peruvian Amazon region of South America.

Laurie, Lyndi, and I will begin this long-term presence in Pucallpa for Scalpel At The Cross in August 2015. We believe this on-going presence will be used by our great God to develop a framework of relationships through which many of our patients and contacts will be drawn into the worship of Jesus in the church.

It is a large vision ... too large for us. Again, we have learned that when we bring our little to the Lord and ask him ... *what is my little offering in the light of a vision and work that is so large?* He responds by saying ... *bring it to me and have the people sit down!* (cf. John 6:10) We are going to Pucallpa not as the answer but as small, little lives in the Lord's hands ... and we expect that God is going to feed them with Himself!✝





# SCALPEL AT THE CROSS **TIME LINE**

**2003** - May - Land purchased on Cashibo campus

**2004** - December - Jungle Bunks completed

**2005** - June - First Scalpel Mission Team Trip: Team Members - Dr. Peter & Dani Cole, Bob, Scott & Lisa Korljan, Trent Whitcomb, Chad Robran; relationship formalized with Hospital Regional de Pucallpa



**2006** - Lisa Schroder named Mission Director

**2006** - Board of Directors assembled: Peter & Nancy Cole, Lisa Schroder, Bob Korljan, Chad Robran

**2007** - Fall - First Scalpel's Edge printed and distributed



**2008** - Kelli Hooks accepted Mission Coordinator position

**2007** - Dra. Rosa Escudero accepted position as Peruvian Medical Director for Clinical Outcomes Program

**2009** - Scalpel Clinic & Fellowship Hall completed

**2009** - First successful Intramedullary Fixation of a long bone completed with SIGN Nail System in the jungle

**2011** - April - Halo Ministries established

**2011** - April - Dr. Jason Caron & Joel Molitor added as Scalpel Board members

**2011** - November - First Total Hip Arthroplasty Surgery conducted in the jungle

**2009** - April - First prosthetic patient received prosthesis

**2011** - 1000th Patient evaluated and 100th surgery performed

**2013** - January - First Medical Campaign at Hospital Amazonico

**2013** - January - OWANSA Club playground equipment ground breaking ceremony



**2014** - June - Peggy Gasior added as Scalpel Board member

**2014** - January - Peggy Gasior accepted Mission Director position

**2013** - January - University of MN Medical Foundation Resident Program established affording annual Scalpel scholarships to medical residents

**2014** - May - First college student mission trip co-led by Dani Cole, ministering primarily to children and youth in the area

**2014** - October - Subspecialty of Foot & Ankle surgeries campaign led by Dr. Mark Hedrick

**2014** - Year of Records - 3 surgical trips plus first college student ministry trip resulting in record values of medical impact

"For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."  
Psalm 100:5