



Scalpel's Edge

A Family's Mission? Yes!

**By Melonie Robran,
2007 Mission Team Member**

My first trip to Peru – Where to start? A couple of times on this trip I was asked the question: “so what is your favorite part of the trip thus far” or “what has had the most impact on you thus far?” There were so many first experiences that were so huge for me that the answer couldn't possibly have been narrowed down to one thing.

I've been strong in my faith for most of my life, but this mission trip was a first for me. That alone was incredible. Then to be able to squeeze in a trip to Machu Picchu was perfect! Bonus! I can't

Continued on Page 5

Inside this Issue:

- July 2007 Trip Notes
- It's a Jungle Out There!
- Monkey Tales
- Special Thank You's
- Notes of Gratitude
- Prayer Points

This Patient Can't Shop Around

(the Story of a Child with Severe Clubfoot)

By Jason Caron, M.D., 2007 Mission Team Member

Cruising above the clouds in the middle of the night somewhere over Central America on my way to Peru, it really sank in. This was what I had wanted to do since I first was interested in becoming a doctor. It was the first stage in fulfilling a longstanding dream; to be able to use my medical training to meet the human needs of people with the goal of winning souls to Christ. This was a major influence in deciding to pursue medicine as a career and in my selection of orthopaedic surgery as a specialty.

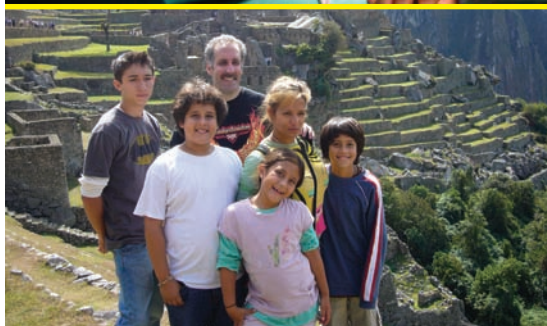
I had tried, with Dr. Cole's gracious help, to arrange this trip on a few occasions earlier in my training, but various circumstances prevented me from going. Finally, in my last year of residency, everything materialized. It was truly God's impeccable timing that allowed this trip to happen when it did. Had I gone earlier, I would not have been as prepared to contribute. The experience was most valuable to me at this point. Despite having wanted to do this for a long time, I really did not know what to expect.

Our first day at the hospital was distinct from anything I had experienced in medicine to that point. We were warmly greeted by the surgeons, nurses, and staff. After introductions, we began inpatient rounds, where we encountered three patients in need of surgery. There was a young man with a femur fracture from a motor vehicle crash, a young girl whose hand was caught in a roller press with bad tissue and bone injuries, and a woman with an infected heel/Achilles tendon (the result of an accidental gunshot wound that occurred when she inadvertently tripped a shotgun-trap intended for wild game).

After rounds, we proceeded to the clinic. We rounded the corner and walked into a long hallway packed with patients anxiously waiting for us. These patients had gone through a screening process previous to getting to this point. There was a sense of urgency as we came walking down the hallway. It was clear that the people feared that if they did not step up and press forward they might miss their opportunity to be seen.

Continued on Page 4

A Gift of Light, Hope and Surgery to Peru



July 2007 Trip Notes

By Peter A. Cole, M.D.

The July trip was a smashing success with a team of 22 despite all kinds of attacks from the evil one. The team overcame rupturing gall bladders, 12 cases of Cuzco's revenge, delirium-inducing fatigue, wasp stings, spider bites, unexpected animal encounters, emergency return trips to Lima...and the U.S., hoarsening bronchitis in 6, three flat tires on 3rd world highways, one truck stuck in the mud--off the road, another with an expired alternator, an OR which lost electricity during three cases and an OR sterilizer which broke down for a day. Each of us returned with elbows locked together, a unified spirit, and loads of elation to shout from the mountaintops that with His strength, none of these circumstances, nor darkness, infirmity, nor death of any sort, could separate us from the love of God.

Our July 2007 team evaluated over 150 patients in various clinics held at Hospital de Pucallpa, Jungle Bunks (the Scalpel Guest House) and at nearby Shipibo villages.

We provided surgical care for 16 patients and here are details for several of them:

Patient
Injury

Jorge (age 9)

A tree fell on the canoe which this boy was in 4 months prior causing an open wound to his right leg which was now infected.

Care Provided

The wound was cleaned and the boney injury was fixed with plates and screws.

Patient
Injury

Oscar (46)

This man was treated 22 months earlier for broken bones in his right leg, but the wound became infected and the bones did not heal.

Care Provided

Surgery was completed to fix the broken bone fragments in his leg using an intramedullary rod with locking screws.

Patient
Injury

Jairo (age 23)

Involved in a hit-and-run accident 3 months prior which fractured his left forearm. He had received no treatment for the injury to date.

Care Provided

Surgery was completed to fix the broken bones using plates and screws.

Patient
Injury

Francezcole (age 14)

Fell on his right arm facturing both bones while playing soccer 24 days prior. Was previously treated with a splint, but his bones were not in alignment.

Care Provided

Placed pins in arm to hold the bone fragments in place during healing.

It's a Jungle Out There!

By Dan Zachary, 2007 Mission Team Member

I was fortunate to join the Scalpel team for the July 2007 trip to Peru and will always be grateful for the chance to spend time with people who have a passion for God and for their neighbors. I saw so many things on the trip: the ancient culture of Cuzco with its history coming alive before my eyes as I walked through the city, the fascinating architectural feat of Machu Picchu (my hike up the mountain was a feat, too, but that's a different story!), and the jungles of Pucallpa, both the wooded type where our "Jungle Bunks" is located and the motorized type that is downtown! Most importantly, I saw pictures of the smiling faces of recovering patients and those whom we had touched.

Through it all, I could feel God's presence as we made our way through the busy agenda and turn of events. You see, I believe that when people like me visit the mission field, it's not only about doing God's work for other people, it's about letting God continue His work in us. You've heard, perhaps many times, that you have to have the faith of a child, that you must want God like you want your next breath. From what others have told me and from my own experiences, I know that the mission field is a place where you live these truths.

My role on the trip was to make some minor repairs and improvements to Jungle Bunks house, the Scalpel guest house. One small project resulted in an afternoon adventure to downtown Pucallpa. I had managed to create a bit of a crisis situation at Jungle Bunks since my repair efforts required the unanticipated shutdown of the entire water supply to the house. Yes, right at the time when the meal was being prepared and kids needed to use the bathroom. In order to "fix" things, I needed to travel to town by myself and buy some supplies. The only way that I knew where to go was due to my unexpected trip to town the previous night with one of the SAMAir missionaries. Was that a

coincidence? Maybe, but it seems that when you learn to trust God, the number of coincidences that you experience increases.

After I made my purchase and pulled onto the main road, I realized that the truck had a flat tire. After a call back to SAMAir to find out where the jack equipment was stowed in the truck, I started to remove the lug nuts on the wheel. It was hot and dirty, and even though there were people, trucks and mototaxis everywhere, I felt completely alone for just a second. Then I realized once more that God was in control, and with me, just like He always had been. As I was bent over, straining to loosen the lug nuts, I could tell that someone was behind me. I wondered, "Is this good or bad? Am I going to be a headline back home? How do I explain that I lost the truck to a stranger?" I turned around and looked at the man, and truthfully, I instantly thought "an Angel!" Sure enough, with a smile on his face and who knows what Spanish words gushing from his mouth, he reached for the lug wrench and proceeded to loosen all of the lug nuts for me, using his foot to stomp on the wrench. I probably would have "wrenched" my back and still not loosened them had I continued. He handed me the wrench and I thanked him with a "MUCHAS Gracias!" as he disappeared into the crowd. I then changed the tire and returned home, avoiding the disaster that would have occurred had the surgical team come home to no water!

How often do you look at an American coin and see the words "In God We Trust" and simply shrug off the thought with an automatic "of course I do"? Serving as part of a mission team is a good way to begin realizing why the founding fathers thought it was important to keep this message in front of us. The flat tire episode was just one of many where we were given the chance to trust God completely. Doing so doesn't remove life's difficulties, pain, or other challenges, but it adds joy to knowing, really knowing, that we trust in a God who cares about us and will take care of us.



Dan enjoys a lighter moment during the Mission holding an anaconda.

Many thanks go out to the Scalpel At The Cross organization for letting me share in realizing the vision of reaching out to the people of Peru. As God-given medical skills improve the lives of the patients, their good news becomes God's Good News to countless others.

This Patient Can't Shop Around

Continued from Page 1.

Many had major orthopaedic problems and this was their shot at getting the care they (or their son or daughter) needed. They had no appointment time or guarantee that they would be seen. Most patients had orthopaedic problems that would no doubt be treated surgically in the States. During this first day of clinic, we booked our entire surgical schedule for the remainder of our time in Pucallpa. We later encountered numerous other surgical candidates, some of whom we were able to help by operating late into the night, but many had to be postponed for future trips.

The next day, I was asked to provide a short children's clinic followed by a Ponsetti Clubfoot casting seminar at the Swiss Mission, a neighboring Christian ministry bible compound. The patients with acute injuries and the infection seen the day prior needed to be treated. I was disappointed to miss the surgeries, but I understood the obligation and importance of meeting with the nurses and staff of the Swiss Mission to help educate about early recognition and treatment of congenital clubfoot.

After arriving at the Swiss Mission and starting to get the presentation set up, one of the nurses directed my attention to a Shipibo Indian family in the audience. The nurse explained that this family had heard that we were going to be giving a seminar on Clubfoot treatment. Their daughter had a severe Clubfoot deformity, which was recognized shortly after her birth but had never received treatment. She had learned to walk on it, but had been walking on essentially the outside and top of her foot because her foot was completely rolled under. Recently, she had developed a large painful bursa over the part of the foot where she was bearing weight and had reached a point where she was now unable to walk. This girl's father, uncle, and

mother had paddled fifteen hours by dugout canoe on the outside chance that they could get treatment for her.

I gave the presentation as planned and agreed to see this girl afterward. Clubfoot in developed countries is treated in the majority of cases with manipulation and casting starting at one week of age. The infant undergoes serial casting and eventually the foot assumes a normal position. This usually does not require any major surgery and typically yields a functional, painless foot with minimal cosmetic issues. In retrospect, this must have been difficult for her family to hear. Their daughter did not have access to this type of care and now had a painful, nonfunctional, and cosmetically displeasing foot that would require surgery.

After the talk, I examined the child and tried to formulate my response. We had seen children with clubfoot in the clinic the day prior and decided not to operate on them this trip because we had already filled our operative schedule with trauma-related cases.

While I was examining her, I could tell that the family was hopeful we could help. Looking into these parent's eyes it was evident to me that although we lived worlds apart, we shared the same affection and hope for our children. They loved their daughter and they knew, if left untreated, her clubfoot would make her life a difficult one. As a father of two young boys, I could relate to what I was seeing in their eyes. It was heartbreaking.

Moved by her story, Dr. Cole and I made the decision that we would contact the family and arrange for her to have surgery. I began to get nervous realizing that I would be responsible for planning and performing the surgery. I had never done this specific surgery before. In the States, pediatric-trained orthopaedic surgeons do this type of operation. As I expressed my concern to him, Dr. Cole painted a picture for me that changed my attitude. This girl had no other options. The likelihood that she would ever get treatment elsewhere was miniscule. It came down to whether I could do it safely and effectively leave her with a better, less painful foot to walk on. I prayed and I believed I could.

Following a few late nights preparing for surgery and praying - asking for God's blessing, the day of her surgery came. We had several cases before hers. I started the surgery late in the evening and Dr. Cole joined me midway through the procedure.



The surgery went smoothly and I was pleased with the correction. It was wonderful to see the gratitude expressed by her parents afterwards and to consider the impact that this may have on the rest of her life.

In a city of 300,000 and uncounted additional people in surrounding villages, there is very limited access to the few orthopaedic surgeons who have the daunting task of caring for this population. When surgery is needed, the implants are far too costly for most to afford. For every patient we were able to assist, many more were turned away. But it was immensely gratifying to realize what a tremendous difference our being there made in the quality of life for those whom we were able to serve. It was a humbling and enlightening experience. Missionary James Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." I think that everyone on the Scalpel team would agree, our time was freely given but we received much more than we gave.

I would like express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Cole, the Scalpel at the Cross team, and its generous supporters for the opportunity to assist on this trip.



A Family's Mission? Yes!

Continued from Page 1.

even describe the awe I felt when coming over to the edge and looking out over the mountain top ruins...trying to put myself back in time to imagine what it might have been like to live here or to have been the explorer to have discovered it years ago. The mystery of why they deserted this place is intriguing.

A valuable piece of this trip was the ability to watch my husband, fist hand, interacting with the surgeons and doing what he does best. I thought I understood what he did, but I have gained a greater appreciation and understanding for it now. I doubt that could have happened here in the States. I'm so thankful that I was able to witness how his role fits into the bigger picture in the Operating Room. I feel so fortunate to have been able to walk with the medical team on rounds, to see the patients in recovery and pass out toys to the children to cheer them up. The joy continued as I got home and emailed the photos we took of these Peruvian kids holding their toys to the children here in the States who had given those toys so they could see where they were going. To simply have a hand in helping kids understand the concept of giving is so rewarding.

The most emotional part of the trip, that probably tops the list from a personal aspect, was the trip by float plane to one of the native villages along the tributaries of the Ucayali River. This was truly an experience of a lifetime. We arrived at the village to be greeted by the children and other Indian villagers on the shore at Comunidad Nativa de Calleria. I've seen these images on video with my husband having done a similar visit on a prior mission trip, but from the couch in my living room within the comfort of my own home – there is no way I could understand the enormity of it all and the amazing impact that connecting with these people would have on me! It was here that we handed out much of the clothing, candy, bar soap and toys that we had collected and hauled from the States. Not being from a medical background, this was one way I felt I could contribute and help these people who have so few things. It was such a joy to see how receptive they were to us and what we brought them. I'm already planning for what I can send with the next team.

Thank you to Dr. Peter Cole, Nancy and family for all the sacrifices and time you've put into this mission, to not only make it possible to have the incredible impact that you do for the patients you encounter, but also for the impact the team members such as myself and my family has on the mission team members such as myself and my family. Our daughter Aliyah was along on this journey at 3 ½, going on 4 years old. Her favorite thing on this trip was also the float plane! Did she understand all about the mission work? Perhaps not, but that will come. She did gain an appreciation for things that we take for granted. I'm happy that we exposed her to that and to the bigger world beyond our great state of Minnesota. I know she and I will be back again. She started talking about the plane rides in the car yesterday and I asked her if she'd want to go back to Peru. She gave a resounding "YES!"



Monkey Tales

by Danielle C. Cole



Everyone expects “crazy” things to happen in the jungle. However, not even I saw this one coming...

It was our first morning at Cashibo. We had finally arrived in the jungle and were getting settled in. The medical team was at the hospital and other team members were making runs into town. The rest of us decided to pay a visit to some of our jungle neighbors and visit their mini-zoo, which consists of Amazon parrots, cats, dogs, and of course, monkeys!!

Everyone was having a grand time watching and interacting with the most inquisitive creatures of the bunch, namely, the monkeys. There were different types, ranging in size, color, and personality. The most social were two howler monkeys that stood about a foot and a half tall and ran around playfully swinging in the trees and jumping from person to person. We were having a great time with these two, in particular. The owner walked by me with one on her shoulder, I extended my arm for the monkey to hang onto, but instead of crawling onto my arm, to my surprise, the monkey began biting me.



It took a few moments to realize what was going on, but I knew that this did not fall within normal playful behaviors. The howler monkey bit me four or five times before we were able to get her off, leaving multiple puncture marks. Our neighbor cleaned out the wound and put disinfectant on it. She was apologetic, but we assured her that it was all right and we assumed that that was the end of the story.

The rest of the day went on fairly normally until some of the medical team members, who had just arrived home, said that I should go to Hospital de Pucallpa. I was quite dazed, as in a minute's time, this had turned from a crazy little mishap to a seemingly more urgent situation. Upon arrival at the hospital, I overheard my dad saying that after speaking with the infectious disease consultants in the States, he'd decided that I would need to fly to Lima to begin rabies vaccinations. Ugh! Upset and teary-eyed (knowing that this would take two days out of my jungle stay), I went to have the wound scrubbed with topical antibiotics. Shortly thereafter, we took a “scavenger hunt” to five different pharmacies in town to find the right oral and IV antibiotics which were begun immediately.

The next morning, my mom, Dra. Rosita (a doctor from Lima who'd joined our team for our two week stay) and I flew out of Pucallpa. Arriving in Lima, we found ourselves doing the pharmacy run again, followed by a visit to a clinic where Dra. Rosita gave me what was to be the first of six rabies injections delivered across a month's time.

So that is my monkey menagerie, yet it proved to be so much more. I found that throughout this whole experience God was working in every aspect. Using it all for my ultimate good and for His ultimate glory. God had a greater purpose in mind with this incident...one that did not necessarily reveal itself at first glance, but upon reflection, proved to be true.

For starters, the two-day side trip to Lima provided the subset of us who went with the



much needed rest and rejuvenation necessary to jump back onto the “fast track” upon returning to the jungle. It also created an opportunity for Dra. Rosita to see her one year-old son, as he'd been struggling without his mother while she so graciously assisted our medical team. Additionally, the whole episode gave my mom and I a chance to get to know and love Rosita with whom we had just become acquainted, and to utilize and become more confident with our limited Spanish speaking abilities.

All of these purposes are wonderful in and of themselves, but the greatest thing God did for me through this experience was to teach me, once again, to trust in His wisdom, judgment, and timing.

God is Sovereign. He has the greatest purpose and good in mind at all times. We might not always understand that purpose right away; in fact, we probably won't. We simply have to keep trusting Him and moving forward in faith in spite of our lack of “sight.”

Now, when other people examine my wrist, they see the remnants of monkey bites. When I look at it, though, I will forever be reminded of God's love, protection, and faithfulness towards me and my family. His ways are perfect and He is greatly to be praised!!!



Special Thank You's for Equipment and Other Donations:

There are many surgeries which have been and will be executed because equipment was made available for the surgeons through generous donations. Many implants are simply not available in this remote Peruvian jungle town and, even if they were, most patients in Pucallpa could not afford to pay the price.

To **Jim Lisignoli** and **Tim Hinueber** from **Synthes USA** for the gift of a Blade Plating Kit to execute skeletal osteotomies. These are operations in which the surgeon cuts bones at special angles to correct deformities which have occurred due to neglected fractures.



To **Dr. and Mrs. Bryan & Carla Matanky** for their generous donations of time, travel and vital orthopaedic power equipment to Hospital de Pucallpa which enabled more efficient surgery and thus a greater number of patients who would otherwise not have been able to obtain treatment.

To the **Zimmer and Stryker Corporations**, for various and sundry orthopaedic instruments and equipment which would be otherwise impossible for the Scalpel Ministry to obtain (due to access and total value).

To **Christi Koester, RN** (Regions Hospital OR), for her continued efforts in supplying Scalpel At The Cross with outdated instruments and equipment which otherwise goes to waste.

In addition to equipment, many of YOU across the USA and in PERU offer your abilities and assistance to uplift and support this ministry. Whether through dedicating your prayer support, financial support, sending gifts of all types for the Peruvian people, offering your skills such as sewing, organizing surgeries in Pucallpa and maintaining or overseeing the Scalpel Jungle Bunks in Cashibo, WE THANK YOU! Your efforts truly allow us to show Christ's Love in Peru through this medical ministry.

Prayer Points

We would covet your prayers for the following:

- An opportunity for Dr. Jose Paredes to come to the United States of America for an eight week period of training. We feel this would have lasting impact to the orthopaedic health of the city of Pucallpa, conveying a standard of care, reinforcing principles in the treatment of bone fractures and deformity, and teaching new techniques which are unknown and currently unavailable in Pucallpa. Dr. Paredes has been an invaluable partner to Dr. Cole and all the medical teams which have visited Pucallpa since the first trip to the hospital in 1999. Without his willingness and enthusiasm to serve as liaison between our teams and the hospital patients and its leaders, little of our work would be realized. He has been the first to the hospital and the last to leave on every day of every trip... making sure the patients are prepped, pushing anesthesia, writing all the orders, and countless more activities.
- The means for two patients to come to the US for treatment of their conditions, which are impossible to be managed in Pucallpa. We feel that this would also be a strong message to the people of Pucallpa who are very aware of our ministry.
- For doors to be opened for Jason Caron, M.D., who will set out to raise 15K for a SIGN Nail System for Hospital de Pucallpa. This system aids in the technique of nailing femur and tibia fractures without the sophisticated necessities of executing such surgeries in the United States.

Notes of Gratitude

To **Dr. Luis Rengifo**, Chairman of Surgery and to **Dra. Esmeralda A. Gomez Alvarez**, Executive Director;

For their warm welcome to Hospital de Pucallpa, opening all the necessary doors for our team to function, organizing a press conference for our team to communicate to the people of Pucallpa, and for their symbolic gifts to the Scalpel team members upon departure. "Their graciousness is overwhelming and critical to the success of the medical program which has improved with each visit." **Peter Cole**



To **Dra. Rosa Escudero (a.k.a. Rosalita)** and her family:

For the enormous technical support to the team during the ramp up and execution of the recent July visit. Dra. Escudero is a young General Surgeon who practices part time in Lima, and who by providence has family connections in Rochester, Indiana where Lisa Schroder, Mission Director lives. Her heart is bigger than gold and our gratitude for her time and effort traveling with the team is profound.



Dra. Rosita Escudero and family.

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A Christian Medical Mission to the Peruvian Amazon

