REFLECTIONS ON SURGERY IN GUATEMALA (1989)

Recently, a medical educator in Florida speaking about medical education said, "You can't educate the teachers of tomorrow in the environment of "yesterday."" One wonders whether such a statement is true.

The doctors and teachers of the Medicine of tomorrow will doubtless face a world much different from the world of today. The instruments which will be used, the computers which will provide information, the increasing technology of various studies concerning the human body and mind, will doubtless continue to progress. However, there is still the patient in all of his complexities and in all of his varying pathology possessing a multitude of problems whether he be in a massive forty-two million dollar multi-specialty clinic in Tampa or in the rather primitive but functional Nacional Hospital of San Marcos, Guatemala.

Dr. Peter Knight and I, along with a medical and surgical team of American doctors and nurses, returned on March 13 from a 10 day missionary medical trip to the mountains of Guatemala. Our first vision of the Nacional Hospital of San Marcos revealed a long line of patients queued up at the entrance at the hospital waiting to be seen. Each day from early morning until sundown a very large number of patients were seen in both the medical and surgical areas demonstrating an astounding variety of pathologic processes. In the operating rooms we were privileged to do pediatric, ENT, gynecological, as well as general surgical procedures with the assistance of excellent, Christ exalting, Guatemalan surgeons.

On our surgical rounds, and in the clinics, in the few days that we were there we saw pathology which we rarely see in our American practices. Consider: typhoid perforation of the small bowel, fibrosarcoma of the maxilla, carcinoma of the tongue and the floor of the mouth, uterine agenesia and hermaphroditism, cholangiocarcinoma of the common bile duct among a multitude of other orthopedic, urologic and pediatric problems all presenting in one long day.

Surgery is done there without the benefit of electrolyte studies or any laboratory tests other than a CBC and urinalysis. X-ray studies are relatively inadequate and CAT scans, MRI scans, brain scans and such things are unheard of. Intestinal anastomoses are done with sutures and without stapling devices. No dermatomes are present for skin grafting and no endoscopic equipment is available.

One might say that practicing medicine in Guatemala, in areas other than Guatemala City, is more primitive than that done in the United States thirty years ago. Yet patients are operated upon and the mortality and the morbidity statistics are very low from what we could see. One wonders whether the physician actually needs all of the tools which are considered to be essential in modern American Medicine. Certainly medical students should be taught primitive basic medicine and surgery before they are launched continued on next page.
into the complex technical and scientific world of modern American Medicine and Surgery. They should have the opportunity of seeing much pathology and being involved in a one-on-one situation with a multitude of patients, many of whom are inoperable and untreatable when first seen. It is possible that in such a situation our medical students and residents would have a greater appreciation of what American Medicine has accomplished and would indeed have a greater sense of compassion toward the multiplied thousands of people across the world who receive no medical care whatsoever or inadequate care at best.

The environment of yesterday is still present in the majority of the world. Most doctors and perhaps many in the United States will not have the privilege of working in the rarified environment of the multi-million dollar clinics of our American Medical institutions. The teachers of tomorrow, those who will teach Medicine, Surgery and Pathology and the other disciplines could well afford to spend a decade in the Third World before entering practice in the American hospital system. It is possible that such training in the "environment of yesterday" could make the doctors and teachers of tomorrow a more compassionate and a more experienced group of physicians than those who are entering practice today. This would certainly be true if they found the Lord Jesus Christ along the way and learned the truth and the power of believing prayer. In Guatemala prayer and the love of Christ are encouraged and utilized to the benefit of staff and patients rather than forbidden and vilified as is the present trend in the "Christian" hospitals of America.

CONCERNING CMF FINANCES

The end of 1989 is approaching and we again appeal to you to make your tax deductible gift to CMF prior to January 1. In order for the Foundation to enter the new year (and the new decade) with all recurring expenses paid, our budget requires year-end giving of $48,000. Please make your part in meeting this need a matter of prayer and personal guidance. 1990 and the final decade of this century will surely be a time of wonderful fruition as well as challenge for CMF. "The vision is a witness for the appointed time.... If it tarry wait for it; for it will surely come without delay" (Habakkuk 2:3). "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). At Thanksgiving we thank our blessed Lord and you His servants. At Advent we thank God who gave us Jesus the Life-giver and the giver of Hope. At Christmas we join you all in praising God for "His unspeakable Gift (precious beyond telling - His indescribable, inexpressible, free gift" (2 Cor. 9:15)).

WSR

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Enclosed please find my donation/pledge for:

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CALENDAR

DECEMBER

2  NAPLES, FLORIDA  6:00 p.m.
   Dr. Reed
   FGEMFI Naples Depot
   5th Ave. S. and 10th St. S.
   Contact: Larry Hammond (813) 261-4499

9  TAMPA, FLORIDA
   Kay Reed
   Catholic Christian Center
   Contact: Vivian Ramirez  875-5297

23  DAYTONA, FLORIDA  7:30 p.m.
    CMF Monthly Meeting
    First Presbyterian Church
    620 S. Grandview Avenue

JANUARY 1990

12-14  LEESBURG, FLORIDA
   Kay Reed
   LADIES ANNUAL RETREAT/LIFE ENRICHMENT CENTER
   Contact: Cindy Scott (407) 859-3548

27  DAYTONA, FLORIDA  7:30 p.m.
    CMF Monthly Meeting
    First Presbyterian Church
    620 S. Grandview Avenue
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A beautiful Christmastide to one and all friends of the Littlest Angel.

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Christmas is a time of lights, joy, peace, hope and expectation.

He has promised to lead us in the Light of His Word down the pathway of life without fear and always with great expectations when our faith is in Him.

Christmas is a time for us to reflect and be grateful for all Jesus has done for us, bringing light and life into our lives.

It was a thrilling experience to have the doctors and wives here at the foundation for the 17th National Conference October 18-22. The Littlest Angel was the center of joyous activity as the doctors and their wives came prepared to Christmas shop.

Saturday, the barbecue and quilt auction was one of the highlights of the conference, with wonderful music, fellowship and just a beautiful time experienced by everyone. I wish you all could have been here.

This year we have packaged individual basket gifts in many price ranges for men, women and children. If you would be interested, or have any other questions regarding gifts, let me know how much you wish to spend and who the gift is for. We would be delighted to make a selection, gift wrap and send it off to you in time for Christmas. Our telephone number is (813) 932-3688.

We wish all of our friends could come and browse, but perhaps that will be possible one day soon.

Have a Merry and Blessed Christmas.

Love,

Kay

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3. CONSIDERATION OF ETIOLOGY
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SURGEON PLACEMENT PROGRAM. Interested in working in Belize short or long term? Contact: Dr. Bill Johnson, 2101 Foust Ave., Ste. 124, San Jose, CA 95128.

SEEKING MEDICAL OR SURGICAL OPHTHALMOLOGIST. CONTACT: The Eye Clinic, 408 W. Second, Centralia, IL 62801, Attn: Ellen, (618) 532-5531.

SEEKING a Christian Medical Position or a Christian Associate? Write Vera O'Keefe, O'Keefe Personnel Service, 3384 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, GA 30326.

DIRECTOR - Residential Chemical Dependency Program in hospital setting. Send resume to Christian Medical Foundation, Inc.

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WANTED CHRISTIAN PEDIATRICIAN to join Dr. in Eastern Kentucky. CONTACT: Dr. Miller, P.O. Box 379, Bonnyman, KY 41719.

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MEDICAL AND DENTAL MINISTRY - Mercy Ships' outreach to the Dominican Republic 1/90-3/90. CONTACT: Pamela L. Higginson RN, Medical Services Coordinator, Mercy Ships, P.O. Box YWAM, San Pedro, CA 90733, (213) 519-1936.

SEEKING ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON - Board certified/eligible with interest in spine surgery and trauma. CONTACT: Peter J. VanGiesen, M.D., 908 S. George St., York, PA 17403, (717) 848-4800.

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