

On Land and Sea

Update – July 10, 2011

Serving the people of Sierra Leone

The hospital onboard the *Africa Mercy* provides specific surgical services. The types of cases are pretty clearly defined and depend on the surgeons onboard at any particular time, their expertise, and the equipment and supplies available. However there are times when we are able to help outside of our normal realm of service. Such is the case of Josephine.

Two year old Josephine inhaled a stone which became lodged in her bronchus. Her parents could hear the rattle with every struggling breath. For 8 days she was sent from one clinic or hospital to another, but no one was able to help her. In desperation her parents took her to the Minister of Health, hoping to plead her case and find help. That's where the miracle began! They met Ann Goag, well-known for her charity work in Africa and a member of the Mercy Ships International Board.

Ann put in a call to Dr. Gary Parker, Chief Medical Officer for the *Africa Mercy*. After explaining the situation, arrangements were made for Josephine, her parents, and the local specialist Dr. Kabineh to be brought by ambulance to the ship where a pediatric anesthesiologist and an intensive care unit (ICU) were available to support their efforts to save the child's life. However, Dr. Kabineh and Dr. Parker worked for five hours to remove the stone without success. Dr. Parker called Ann back to explain that what Josephine needed was a pediatric thoracic surgeon, but there wasn't one on the ship, in Sierra Leone, or any nearby west African nation.

Josephine was admitted to the intensive care unit with 24-hour care. About 3:00 am, ICU Nurse Melissa Warner was working the night shift when Josephine lost her breathing tube. Her vital signs were crashing. Dr. Michelle White, the pediatric anesthesiologist, was paged, but it would take her several minutes to respond. "In my mind, I said 'I need help!'" Melissa said. "And when I looked up, there was Corina Buth standing in the doorway in her pajamas!" Corina, a pediatric ICU nurse from the Netherlands, had been restless and couldn't sleep. She did CPR, and Josephine's vital signs returned to normal. Then Dr. Michelle arrived and replaced the breathing tube.



Ann phoned a professor friend in Nairobi and explained the need. He put her in touch with Dr. James Munene, who she convinced to fly immediately to Freetown to save Josephine's life. Teaming with Dr. Gary, Dr. James operated on Josephine, fishing the stone out of her bronchus with ease.



It is amazing to see the many things that had to happen for this tiny girl to survive. Her parents had to keep her alive for eight days after she inhaled the stone. Ann Gloag had to be visiting the office of the Minister of Health at the same time that Josephine and her parents were there. Dr. James Munene had to agree to perform a surgery for an organization of which he had never heard; a pediatric anesthesiologist had to be available; and Nurse Corina had to be drawn to the ICU because she couldn't sleep. This incredible timing and all of these wonderful people were part of the miracle that allowed Josephine to grin happily as she left the *Africa Mercy* as a healthy little girl.

Dr. James was captivated by the mission and hopes to return to volunteer his services. "Really, it's a privilege to come and see what people are doing while others are sleeping and doing nothing," he said.

And God never sleeps – miracles still happen every day. Sometimes we are blessed to be a part of them.

Around Freetown

I don't really get off ship very much – I've become quite a "shipbody" (like homebody, but on a ship!). But, I've had a few opportunities to get out into the crowds and traffic that are Freetown, including a climb of the hill opposite the harbor to the university at the top. Here are a few pictures from my ventures out. Also check out a short video of walking in downtown Freetown on my website at www.hisfamily.com/Images/FreetownMarketStreet.AVI.



View of the ship (blue funnel) from half way up the hill



Local business!



Street traffic in Freetown market district



Lunch with some friends at local restaurant

Africa Mercy Schedule

The schedule for the *Africa Mercy* for the upcoming year has recently been announced. We are making a change in our general outreach schedule. Currently we usually have an outreach of approximately 10 months from February through November of each year serving the medical needs of a West African country; then the months of December and January are taken up with servicing the ship in shipyard, sailing from W. Africa to the ship service location and back, and setting up for the next outreach. The major change is to shift the shipyard time from December/January to the summer months.

To do this we will sail from here to Ghana in early December, have a short break there, then sail to Togo where we'll have a shorter outreach at the beginning of next year. We'll then have the shipyard phase during the summer months of 2012, most likely in Tenerife in the Canary Islands. This will then put us on the new schedule of beginning a 10 month outreach to the country of Guinea in September of 2012.

The new schedule allows us to avoid a large portion of the W. Africa rainy season and also makes it easier to take vacation time in the summer months when the children are out of school and many want to take vacation time anyway. The new schedule is also good for me! I'm planning to take several weeks vacation *next* summer while we're in our shipyard phase. That's still so far away, but less than the 2 years I'd originally planned. I'd love to make a visit before then, but scheduling and finances won't allow that, so send me emails, cards, and letters to let me know you're still out there!

Prayer needs

Shipboard life is very easy compared to what it would be if I was serving in Sierra Leone with any other ministry. We have many comforts of home including air-conditioning, electricity, and clean water. We have a ship shop and snack bar stocked with all sorts of comfort foods: CHOCOLATE, crackers, chips, sodas, etc. We even have Starbucks coffee! My food is prepared for me every day and I don't even have to do the dishes! We have internet access and even limited television service.

Nonetheless, it still has its challenges. Quarters are clean and cool, but small. Food is prepared for us, but there's limited selection and it can get monotonous at times. People are friendly, but you can't always find a quiet corner. Conversely, sometimes you feel very lonely. The people of Freetown are very poor and needy – that's why we're here. But it's draining to constantly have people asking you for money, things, and services you really can't give. Because a large portion of the crew serve short-term (weeks or months) there is the challenge of constantly meeting and training new people; and of constantly saying goodbye to friends. Christians in the local churches are welcoming to us when we visit, but the services are usually much different than what we're used to. They're longer, louder, and in a language we can't understand.

So keep us in your prayers as we serve here. But know, too, that we serve the Lord, not Mercy Ships or even the people of Sierra Leone, and He's the reason we are reaching out to the people of Sierra Leone through Mercy Ships. His love for us makes it all worthwhile! And your prayers support and encourage us along the way.

Blessings!

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Note: If you'd prefer not to receive these updates, rather get them at a different email address, or know of someone else who'd like to receive them, just let me know! Feel free to pass this on to others who might be interested, too.

Financial Support

I serve as a volunteer and am reliant on the support of others for all of my expenses. If you are led to share in my ministry financially, please make checks payable to Mercy Ships and send to: Mercy Ships, Donor Services, P.O. Box 2020, Lindale, TX 75771 with a note designating for the support of missionary Claudia Juarez (#2793). Or, you can make a contribution online at:
<https://connect.mercyships.org/page/outreach/view/crewmates/juarezc>