



FROM SHIP TO SHORE

the chapmans' newsletter
june 2005

Monrovia you can envision what the city might once have been before all of this turmoil and destruction. And because one man decided to go about what should have been a just cause in the wrong manner, the entire country has suffered. This story is so true to much of West Africa, where the people of the land suffer from corrupt governments and politicians who take for themselves and leave their people to starve. Even after the war was over, the price of rice, the country's number one staple, nearly tripled due to government decisions. The United Nations just took over the port where our ship is docked because \$1,000,000 in revenue was going straight into the pockets of those running the port and not into the city. With problems like these facing generations of people, hope is quickly lost.

Will things ever really turn around? Will this country and others actually stand on their own feet again? Will the suffering end? The longer we stay in West Africa, the more discouraging it becomes, to be quite honest, and the answers to these and other questions don't seem too positive. However, we don't know and we might not ever find out. But if these people are to have a hope, then so must we if we're here to help them. A guarantee for restoration of these countries is not how we could keep doing what we're doing without losing purpose and meaning. It is hard to determine if we are really making a difference in this pattern of corruption and injustice. We will keep pressing on because of the words of Jesus and because we see a pattern of countries with a lack of concern for their own people, making His words even more true to our eyes, "you will always have the poor among you."

I am faced with new challenges and treatments that in my wildest nightmares I would never have attempted to tackle in a world of malpractice lawsuits and punitive damages. And as we see that there are literally no other options for these people, the dental team and I lean on God for wisdom to help them, forced into providing them with some type of treatment. And He comes through.

As I walked behind Abel on the streets of Monrovia to catch a taxi with him to the ship, I saw the reactions that so many of Mercy Ships' patients must get for most of their lives. People on the streets walked by Abel and their eyes became adhered to him in disbelief. For eight long years, a portion of what used to be Abel's lower jaw protruded almost one inch through his lower lip. An infection from one small baby tooth had led to an infection of the bone, causing it to die, a condition known as osteomyelitis which I discussed in our very first newsletter from Sierra Leone. The dead, infectious bone only took about twenty minutes to remove and during the Anastasis' next trip to Monrovia, our surgeons will reconstruct his lip. Why has no one helped Abel in eight years?

Junior had been in an accident one month before I saw him. It had taken him two weeks to get to the hospital due to the remoteness of his home and he had been admitted now for two weeks. He had lost three upper front teeth and the fourth was dangling far below its natural position in pain. He had also broken off three of his lower front teeth and had two other loose teeth and a broken lower jaw. The ship has a policy of not treating trauma cases, so it does not become an ER. So, with the guidance of the ship's veteran chief surgeon, we did our best for Junior in two, over two hour appointments in our clinic to clean up the fractured bone, remove hopeless teeth and splint his jaw with elastic bands to get his bite back where it should be. After treating him, I could not help but wonder, "Why was he admitted to the hospital for two weeks and yet nothing has been done?" Junior told me that doctors there wanted 250 U.S. dollars to treat him. For someone like Junior, this would be equivalent to paying about \$25,000 out of pocket in the U.S.

Cases like these will keep us working despite the downpour of hopelessness that can come while working in this part of the world. And yet while what we see as virtual impossibility through our 'developed world' lenses, by some miracle those who are aided by Mercy Ships somehow see a glimpse of hope.

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Mercy Ships is a non-profit organization. Contributions to the Chapmans' work may be sent to Mercy Ships, P. O. Box 2020, Garden Valley, TX 75771. Please enclose a note designating for Keith & Kristin Chapman.



Schedule for Summer Trip Home
15 July Arrive in Nashville
22 July Hot Springs, AR
31 July Ponca City, OK
6 August San Antonio
14 August Port Aransas, TX
20 August Nashville
25 August Depart

PEACE & HARMONY



the edges of downtown monrovia