



Dr. Bernie Nickel donates "Three Ts" to VOSH-Kansas

by Dale K. Cole, OD
Co-Director, VOSH-Kansas
Shortly after traveling with
the VOSH-Kansas team to
Panama earlier this
year, Dr. Bernie Nickel
of Winfield, Kansas,
donated \$10,000 to the
VOSH-Kansas pro-
gram. The March,
2000 trip was his first
VOSH experience.

This significant
donation to VOSH-
Kansas will be invested and
the interest will help fund
optometrists who could not
otherwise take a VOSH trip.
Some of the money will also
go toward the purchase of
equipment used on trips.

Dr. Nickel said of the
impact of the VOSH trip on

his life, "It's not what you do
for them but what they do for
you — you will never be the
same."



Dr. Bernie Nickel

Recently retired,
Dr. Nickel had a solo
practice for 44 years
in Winfield. He and
his wife Dorothy
always wanted to go
on a VOSH trip, but
years ago Mrs. Nickel
was in a car accident,
damaging a leg to the
point where she eventually
needed a prosthesis.

When his wife passed away
in February, 1999, Bernie
decided he needed to partici-
pate in a VOSH trip. He
joined his younger brother,

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L-r: Dr. Patti Fuhr, Dr. Nelson Edwards, Dr. Harry Zeltzer

REPORT FROM ALABAMA: Two new vice-presidents
were elected at the late October annual meeting of V/I in
Alabama: Dr. Patti Fuhr and Dr. Nelson Edwards. Dr. Harry
Zeltzer was elected president-elect and Charles Covington
was appointed secretary-treasurer. Current V/I president Jeff
Marshall recognized retiring past-president Dr. Phil Hottel
and other officers whose role has now changed.

It was a weekend of southern hospitality at its VERY best.
Dr. Patti Fuhr, president of VOSH-Alabama and her team
from the School of Optometry UAB are to be commended
for their hard work and organization of the weekend event.
From the hotel to the meeting room to the great evening
gatherings, they had all bases covered.

The hills of Honduras are alive with the sound of Ruth Berkling

by Zabelle D'Amico

Her story reads like a cur-
rent-day script for "The Sound
of Music," but in Ruth
Berkling's case, personal
tragedy deepened her commit-
ment to a life of service to the
people of Honduras.

Even as a child Ruth wanted
to help people in other coun-
tries. After finishing nursing
studies in 1962, she set out on
her life journey, traveling ini-
tially to southern Germany to
work in a clinic. It was there
that Ruth met Arnold
Berkling, a German business-
man who lived in San Pedro
Sula, Honduras.

Arnold had returned home



Ruth Berkling with a young
Honduran patient

in the aftermath of a bad car
accident in which he lost his
wife and was severely
injured. His two young sons,
ages three and four, remained
with friends in Honduras.
Arnold convinced Ruth to

return to Central America
with him in order to care for
his children.

Ruth arrived in Honduras
with a working contract as a
governess in 1963. Two years
later Honduras became her
permanent home because she
married her boss. The couple
celebrated the birth of a
daughter in 1972.

Since Arnold Berkling had
been a longtime Lions Club
member, Ruth found herself
happily enmeshed in activities
for the poor and sick of this
beautiful country right from
the beginning. Then during
Easter Week, 1978, she and
her husband were called upon

to fete a group of VOSH-
Indiana optometrists who
were conducting a clinic in El
Progreso, a small nearby
town. As time for their stay
drew to an end, the Berkling's
asked the VOSH-Indiana
team to come back again.

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From the President's desk

One down and one to go!



I am not sure where the first year of my presidency has gone, but it's been jam-packed with activity. I'm especially proud that we've seen the web site come online and the total redesign of the VOSH-INTERNATIONAL newsletter.

In keeping with the times, the web-site is rapidly becoming the major source of information about VOSH-INTERNATIONAL and its chapters. An average of 200 people per day continue to log on at www.VOSH.org from locations all over the world.

In June I reported to the House of Delegates at the AOA Congress and I believe it was the first time this had been done. The response to my presentation was fantastic. Following the report, I was able to speak with many delegates. A lot of them had no idea of the scope of VOSH. As a result, one of my newest goals is to better educate our colleagues about VOSH - our history, our goals, our objectives.

We've recently added VOSH-Honduras to our roster of chapters. I hope you will take time to read the front-page feature on Ruth Berklind and the clinic that's been established in San Pedro Sula.

At a breakout session during our annual meeting, Bob Merriam made an excellent presentation on using the RETINOMAX on missions. We'd like to share his talk with you so we've posted the text on our website. Go to (www.VOSH.org) and click on Newsletter Articles.

For the second year of my presidency it is my intention to continue to improve communication. This will include more work on the website and newsletter.

Jeffrey C Marshall, OD
President,
VOSH-INTERNATIONAL

All VOSHers invited to join "fun-raiser"

To the Editor:

As a followup to our successful Kilimanjaro climb last year, we are planning a second such event and would like to invite other VOSHers who'd like to raise money for their own causes to join us.

This year's event, scheduled for May 19-26, 2001, is a 7-day bike ride through Bryce, Zion and Grand Canyon National Parks. The trip will be totally outfitted by the experienced Backcountry Touring Company, including top-of-the-line mountain bikes, lodging, food, van support, etc.

There will be several levels of cycling distances offered for ALL fitness levels. The average long ride each day will be

Seeking help on charging batteries

To the Editor:

VOSH-Kansas is purchasing a Welsh Allen autorefractor and is concerned as to how others are keeping the battery charged when used all day. It supposedly has only 3 hours of use without being charged and the battery can only be charged while in the autorefractor and not in use.

We'd appreciate hearing from you.

Dale Cole, OD dcole@midkan.net

70-75 miles and the short ride will be 30-40 miles. Yet, anyone, at any time, will be able to bail out into the van if they are having a bad day. There will be hiking, too.

Cost of the trip is \$1,500, excluding airfare. All fundraising details haven't been worked out yet, but roughly, if one raises \$5,000, he or she goes free.

Ride through some of God's most spectacular landscape and help relieve suffering at the same time.

Feel free to contact me for further information or to sign on. Space is limited so don't put it off!

Doug Vilella, OD doogie@erie.net
814-459-5707 (w) 814-833-2584 (h)

Help us do a better job

We want to hear from more of you - more letters to the editor, comments regarding what you like, what you dislike, suggestions for future issues, etc. Simply email us at eyeclam@aol.com. Your input will help us do a better job.

Got an interesting feature, photo or anecdote regarding recent missions or other items of interest to VOSHers? Mail your news to V/I Newsletter Editor, PO Box 41, Holden, MA 01520. When sending VOSH photos (good quality only) be sure to include basic information about them.

Bernie Nichol shares time, talent and treasures

Continued from page 1

Dr. Gary Nickel of Independence, Kansas, and the VOSH-Kansas team for the venture.

When asked what inspired him to go, Bernie recalled all the helpful things others had done for him in his life and his appreciation of their efforts. He had come from a large family of little income and optometry had been good to him. He wanted to repay his profession.

Throughout his life Dr. Nickel has ascribed to the philosophy that money doesn't make you happy, but what you do with it brings many joys. Dr. Nickel does not just talk the talk. He financially helped 6 or 7 patients through college and he completely funded a needy 30-

year-old woman through college. (She graduated with a BS in Nursing.) Dr. Nickel made these commitments in addition to funding his own two children's college education.

Dr. Nickel said his life is built around the "Three Ts." When asked to explain, he will simply tell you to "Share your time, talent, and treasures with others."

Perhaps you have funds that can be used to serve the less fortunate. Or how about giving some time to a mission? Please consider signing on for a VOSH trip and/or making a contribution to VOSH/INTERNATIONAL or one of its chapters. For further information, contact Dr. Jeff Marshall, 317-322-7788. His e-mail: drjcm@att.net

What makes Dr. Doug Villella hike and otherwise help VOSH

Editor's note: We'd received a considerable number of e-mail messages from Dr. Doug Villella of PA regarding the Peten Jungle Project in Guatemala. Then, for the last issue Doug submitted a letter about raising funds by climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. Mt. Kilimanjaro? Was he kidding? Since we were curious, we thought you'd like to know more about this driven man who seems to be everywhere, dedicating boundless energy to VOSH-PA and the people of Guatemala.

When he was in optometry school in the 1980s, Dr. Doug Villella participated in an annual SVOSH trip to Haiti. Using newly acquired skills and working with 20 classmates on a population of people in great need, with the added plus of experiencing another culture turned out to be one of the best experiences of Dr. Villella's life.

Graduation interrupted Dr. Villella's newfound interest. He entered the army to fulfill a scholarship requirement but the deep impression of Haiti never left the young optometrist.

Several years later, after settling into optometric practice and family life, Dr. Villella resumed volunteering on VOSH trips to various countries. Gradually he came to feel strongly that surgical care was needed to complement the primary eye care the teams were offering.

Then a great epiphany happened. On his first VOSH-PA trip to Guatemala, a blind man was led into the clinic by his two sons. They had walked for two full days only to find out that there was no

surgeon. Ironically, the very next day the VOSH-PA team met an American missionary, Vincent Pescatore, who invited them to build an eye clinic in the Peten jungle region of Guatemala. Dr. Villella and his fellow VOSHers took on the project.



Dr. Doug Villella and his wife Holly

Since opening in 1997, more than 33,000 people have been treated at the facility. It has been named the Vincent Pescatore Clinic in honor of this dedicated missionary who, tragically, died in a plane crash in early 1996, before the clinic was up and running.

To date, some 2,110 patients have received surgery, mostly cataracts and cornea transplants. VOSH-PA and SVOSH of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry have teamed together to make twelve trips to this region. They have formed a foundation within Guatemala which is directed by the three

clinic ophthalmologists, all Guatemalans, who staff the facility three weeks each month.

With the assistance of a friend who is a professional grantwriter, the dedicated PA VOSHers have tapped into major funding, mostly from Rotary and Lions International Foundations.

The VOSHers have generated more than \$300,000 in grant money to fully equip the clinic with everything from operating microscopes to yag and diode lasers to a huge 1,200 lb. autoclave.

While currently housed in rental space, plans are underway to construct a new eye facility which they anticipate becoming a specialty hospital for the region.

Efforts to create such a successful project have been shared by many VOSH and SVOSH volunteers, says Dr. Villella. His job is chief fundraiser. Other volunteers have responsibilities such as shipping and receiving, requesting surgical supplies, recycling glasses, setting up the optical lab, etc.

Early on in the project, Dr. Villella would spend about 2-3 weeks per year in Guatemala. Since the annual budget exceeds \$200,000, he's now needed more in the states raising money.

Long term goal of the Peten Jungle Project is to follow the objectives of the WHO Vision 2020 initiative and eliminate all avoidable blindness from the Peten region by the year 2008. Dr. Villella estimates a need for 12,000 surgeries. A newly established optical lab will take care of all prescriptive eyewear.

Dr. Villella's wife Holly is a physician assistant. She fell in love with Guatemala on her first visit two years ago and now participates on mission trips doing pre-op workups and general medical care. The Villellas' eleven-year-old daughter is eager to join them, but, says Dr. Villella, "she'll have to wait a few years."

For further information and photos of the Peten Jungle Project, go to our website: www.VOSH.org and click on the link to VOSH-PA.

Taking fundraising to new heights

Somehow Dr. Doug Villella and six other VOSHers came up with the idea of climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro this past March to further assist in generating needed funds. Dr. Villella had never imagined doing such a crazy thing, but it was too good of an opportunity to pass up. To their amazement, the seven hikers realized \$42,000 in sponsorships.

Lest you think such an endurance effort was a whimsical notion, we should mention that Dr. Villella has always been an outdoors person. He's backpacked many of our national parks, competed in triathlons in years past and presently is heavy into long distance cycling.

Dr. Villella and his fellow VOSHers were completely surprised by the huge generosity of folks. In fact, they had such a wonderful time that they've decided to establish an annual "adventure" fundraiser. Next year's endeavor will be a cycling challenge in the southwest and they're inviting VOSHers from other states to join them. (See Dr. Villella's Letter to the Editor on page 2).

Calendar of upcoming VOSH missions

For further information about the following upcoming missions, contact the trip organizer whose telephone and/or email is noted. Trips are listed in order by country and nearest upcoming date. Additional info/photos regarding some clinics are available through links on the V/I website: www.VOSH.org

Mission leaders: We want to do a better job of serving you and VOSHers alike. Please help us by e-mailing updated trip information as soon as it becomes available. With your continued input, we can inform potential VOSHers of opportunities as early on as possible. E-MAIL: eyeclam@aol.com

chuck-jan@cyberdude.com

● ESTELI, NICARAGUA,

Nov. 18-27, 2000

Barbara Plaughter, VOSH-Ohio
arissa@wcoil.com

● BHUTAN, AFRICA, Dec., 2000

David Christopher, VOSH-Oregon
503-658-6600

● SOLOLA, GUATEMALA,

Winter, 2000

John Gehrig, VOSH-FL

orlandoeye@worldnet.att.net

● SAN PEDRO SULA, HONDURAS,

Dec. 3-8, 2000

VOSH-Northwest, Dr. Pat Stamper,
cujuncyedr@aol.com

● CAIRO, EGYPT, Dec. 15-25, 2000

VOSH-Oregon, Dr. Ann Slocum-Edmonds
thedmonds@mun.com

● ROMANIA/MOLDAVIA,

Jan. 2-14, 2001

VOSH-Oregon, Contact Dr. Ann Slocum-Edmonds, thedmonds@mun.com

● HAITI, early 2001

Rick Wentzel, VOSH-PA

ricjag6@aol.com Esp. seeking opticians to help establish new optical lab.

● SAN JUAN DEL SUR, NICARAGUA, Jan. 6-13, 2001

Dr. Matt Blondin, VOSH/NECO

wp_abb@yahoo.com 860-489-02781

● SAN JUAN DE LA MAGUANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

January 6-13, 2001

Dr. Gerry Rudmin, VOSH-NECO

RudminOD@aol.com 207-924-3444

(home) 207-924-3676

● GRANADA, NICARAGUA,

Jan. 13-21, 2001

Dr. Carl Sakovitz, NortheastVOSH

401-423-1377 islandDoc5@aol.com

● NICARAGUA, January, 2001

Dr. Mark Ebben, VOSH-Wisconsin

920-766-2481

● DOMINICA, late Jan. 2001,

VOSH-MI, Dr. Dan Wrubel

docwrubel@aol.com 517-663-2020

● SANTA ANA, EL SALVADOR,

February 2-11, 2001

Contact Dr. Harry Zeltzer, VOSH-NECO

978-356-0447 harryzeltzer@mediaone.net

● GUATEMALA, February, 2001

SVOSH-PCO Doug Vilella doogie@erie.net

● GOMEZ PALACIO, MEXICO,

February, 2001

Mike Brooke, brookemike@hotmail.com

● JAMAICA, Feb., 2001

Phil Lundquist, 605-743-5503

● OAXACA, MEXICO, Feb. 2001,

VOSH-Colorado

Would be happy to have students.

Dr. Glenda Denham, 303-443-2020 or

ehk2@earthlink.net

● SAN JUAN DE LA MAGUANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, Feb. 3, 2001

VOSH-Wisconsin,

Jim Harmsen, 920-324-8608

jansoptical@powerweb.net

Sue Laskowski, 920-469-8656 suelaskowski@yahoo.com

● MORELIA/MICHOACAN, MEXICO,

Feb. 11-Feb. 18, 2001

VOSH-Iowa, Dr. Phil Hottel 319-338-3267

tp hottel@home.com

● THAILAND (two groups),

Feb. 10-24, 2001

VOSH-Northwest,

Dr. Ed Worthen 253-851-2020

ghvision@harbormet.com

Dr. Milt McCrum 360-659-1446

mccrum@aol.com

● EL GRILLO, MEXICO,

Feb. 15-21, 2001

VOSH-PA, Jack Hauler

Handers3@aol.com

● HONDURAS, Feb. 17-24, 2001

Dr. Jeff Marshall, VOSH-Indiana

317-322-7788 drjcm@att.net

● PREDNISAN, HONDURAS,

late Feb., 2001

Dr. Don Kuehn, VOSH-KA

dkuehn@russellks.net 785-483-2291



IT'S A MIRACLE: A simple pair of glasses at the right time can save the vision of this Nicaraguan toddler who was examined by a VOSH-NECO team earlier this year.

Calendar of upcoming VOSH missions

● CHETUMAL, MEXICO

Feb. 28-March 6, 2001

Mila Brujic, VOSH-NEWENCO

Brujic@prodigy.net 617-566-5209

● GUYANA, March 3-10, 2001

VOSH-MI Drs. Bob Foote, Doug Totten
boone@gtii.com

● ST. LUCIA, March 3-10, 2001

VOSH-MI Dr. Dave Storer
student-exchange@net-port.com

● GUAYMAS, MEXICO

March 9-18, 2001

VOSH-MI Jill Cole 517-223-8731

● NOGALES, SONORA, MEXICO

March 13-18, 2001

VOSH-FL Dr. John Gehrig
orlandoeye@worldnet.att.net

● ALLEJUELA, COSTA RICA

March 15-March 25, 2001

VOSH-Wisconsin, Mark Ebben
920-766-2481

● PARAGUAY

March 27-April 11, 2001

VOSH-FL Charles Covington
407-330-52621 VOSHFlorida@mm.com

● GUZAPPA, EL SALVADOR

March 22-30, 2001

VOSH-Oregon, Dr. Ann Slocum-Edmonds,
thedmonds@mm.com

● SANTIAGO, CHILE, late March, 2001

VOSH-OR Dr. Ann Slocum-Edmonds:
thedmonds@mm.com

● GRENADA, March 30-April 6, 2001

VOSH-MI Dr. Nelson Edwards
517-223-9988 eyecare@voyager.net

● PERU, March, 2001

Dr. Mark Ebben, VOSH-Wisconsin
920-766-2481

● LAPAZ, BOLIVIA, April 27, 2001

Eldon Gray, VOSH-Kansas 316-659-3351

● CATACOMAS, HONDURAS

March, 2001

Dr. Don Kuehn, VOSH-KA
dkuehn@russellks.net 785-483-2291

● WASHINGTON STATE, Spring, 2001

VOSH-Northwest, Domestic mission to
examine migrant workers, families

Drs. Cindy Murrill, Stu Frank

Contact: frank.s@ghc.org

● MONTE PLATA

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, June 8-17, 2001

Ulrick Gaillard: bateyrelief@mindspring.com

● LA MERCED, PERU, July 16-24, 2001

VOSH-FL Dr. John Gehrig
orlandoeye@worldnet.att.net

● CROATIA, July 28-Aug. 8, 2001

VOSH-FL Charles Covington, 407-330-5261
VOSHFlorida@mm.com

● TACOA, HONDURAS, date TBA

William Davis, SIGHT FOR THE BLIND
Doug Villella, 814-833-2584 doogie@erie.net

● PUERTO VAILLARTA, MEXICO

September, 2001

VOSH-Northwest, Drs. Ed Rich, Stuart
Frank. Contact: frank.s@ghc.org

● JEREMIE, HAITI, November, 2001

Vosh-NECO, Dr. Robert Pannone
1-860-887-2060

● PANAMA CANAL, Feb., 2002

VOSH-KA Dr. Dale Cole
dcole@midkan.net

● SAMOA, June, 2002

VOSH-Northwest, Dr. Mike DeRosier
dpvc@juno.com

● VIETNAM, late Sept., 2002

VOSH-Indiana Dr. Jeff Marshall
317-322-7788 drjcm@att.net

Clinics, optometrists, teams wanted

If you're looking to find a site for your VOSH team or if you're thinking of taking on a leadership role but don't know where to go, consider the following requests. We'd like to include any additional locations or contacts you may learn of. Send info to: Webmaster Chuck Covington at www.VOSH.org or to the newsletter editor: eyeclan@aol.com

MEDJUGORJE

BOSNIA-HERZOGOVINA: Need optometrists, ophthalmologists to serve refugees, orphans in this area. Contact: Laura Allen, CARE FOR CHILDREN, mlacroten@cs.wva.com

MOROCCO: Urgent request for an OD to assist with cataract screening and for post-op care in Nov, 2000. contact: Jerry Kind, 253-887-8878

DURANGO CITY

DURANGO, MEXICO

Optometric team wanted

Contact Antonio Raul, 011-818-1347

POSELTEGA, NICARAGUA

VOSH group wanted. Contact Barbara Seitz-de Martinez, 812-335-0851. She has family ties in Poseltega.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

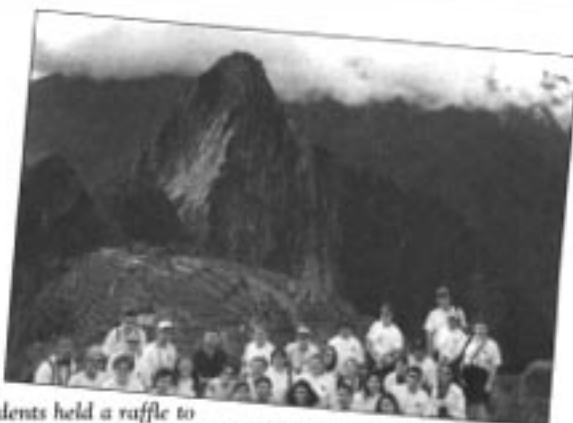
The Batey Relief Organization (BRA) regularly organizes medical teams to serve Haitians who live in difficult conditions on bateyes in the Dominican Republic. Optometrists are needed for these teams. For further information, visit the BRA website: www.bateyrelief.org or contact Ulrick Gaillard, BRA President, at bateyrelief@mindspring.com

JUTIAPA and QUICHE, GUATEMALA

Need for an interested VOSH team to work with 3 Guatemalan ophthalmologists of the Vincent Pescatore Eye Assn. These surgeons are dedicated to the goals of the WHO Vision 2020 initiative of eliminating all avoidable blindness within Guatemala by the year 2020.

Contact Dr. Doug Villella,
doogie@erie.net 814-459-5707

Reports from our chapters



SNOVA in PERU: Lucia Putino, president of Southeastern University's College of Optometry student VOSH group, reports that 5 ODs, 22 students and 5 siblings/spouses traveled to Cuzco, Peru in late April. Two weeks before leaving, students held a raffle to

raise money. Grand prize was 2 tickets to anywhere in the US, donated by the agency from which tickets to Peru were purchased. SNOVA team saw 2,200 patients and distributed over 1,000 pairs of glasses. Children of local Lions members assisted with translating. Normally the site used serves as a dental clinic. Plus cyl phoropters and poles were provided by hosts; three local ODs lent their trial lenses and lensometers. ABOVE L: Third year NOVA student Ben Seljestad with a patient CENTER: Sorting glasses RIGHT: While they worked hard, the team had the pleasure of visiting Macchu Picchu.

VOSH roads to Honduras are well-worn

Magdalene D Corbin, OD

For me, each VOSH mission has always assumed a characteristic theme. On our trip to Honduras earlier this year, it was roads. Why?

On page one hundred twenty-eight of the November, 1999, National Geographic Magazine there is a picture of the Honduran "highway" that had been closed until the day before our departure for that Central American country. The people had endured twenty-eight straight days of rain before our VOSH-Ohio team left the states.

Much of the route from San Pedro Sula to Trujillo was flooded and many of the temporary Bailey Bridges were washed out. This is the same area where Hurricane Mitch had made landfall and caused enormous damage the year before. The new flooding was so severe that our leader, Bill Wolfe hastily began making alternative plans to go to Santa Barbara, site of other VOSH missions. In the few days prior to our departure, our liaison Pete Twitchell made a test trip on the route to Trujillo and determined that it was passable. We would "go for it."

This nearly impassable road conjures in my mind the myriad of roads that define every VOSH mission: roads traveled to bring donations of eyeglasses; roads to bring collected glasses to our

processing center in Pandora Ohio; roads converging on Pandora to transport hundreds of volunteers who prepare the hundreds of thousands of glasses; roads and detours leading VOSHers to mission sites; roads taken by patients who frequently must walk long distances to receive help; roads to organizations to give reports or slide presentations of missions, roads circling 'round a rotary to repeat the cycle again.

* * * * *

We arrived in San Pedro Sula with clear sunny skies and were greeted by the intrepid German Consul, Ruth Berklind whose height is exactly at the level of the darker line on the hallway wall marking the flood line from Mitch. (See front page feature). She cleared us through customs with ease and smoothed the loading of supplies onto "the best bus in Honduras."

We were accompanied on the 230-mile trip to the mission site by two policemen with submachine guns and rifles whose job it was to guard our equipment and the 7,000 pairs of glasses we brought.

Dr Mohinder Gupta headed the surgical team carrying surgical microscopes, phako machines, autoclaves, medicines and surgical supplies to remove 37 dense cataracts, perform 33 pterygia surgeries and 2 foreign body removals.

There were so many unforgettable clinic moments: the tiny ten-year-old Down's child with high myopia who'd never seen well in school and who kept testing her new glasses; the frightened, nearly deaf Garafina woman who trembled during cataract surgery; the elderly man blinded by dense cataracts carefully being guided up the stairs to surgery and his amazement the next morning at being able to see friends and family; the man who saw my wrinkles after his cataract surgery; the dozens of others who had to be referred for special intervention at a later camp.

Villa Brinkley, located on a mountain high above the city was our hotel headquarters. I caution new VOSHers because our accommodations and the new building housing the Fisheries School are not the typical VOSH experience. It was pleasant to be spoiled by our hosts who even arranged for a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner.

At the end of the clinic, we traveled into the countryside and visited Vincent Pescatore's Finca del Nino. After examining 1,400 people, dispensing glasses to a good number of them, completing 72 surgical procedures and experiencing the wonderful Honduran culture, the most difficult road left to travel was away from our new friends toward home.

VOSH newsbriefs at a glance

WEBSITE UPDATE: www.VOSH.org

Webmaster Chuck Covington is pleased to report that the VOSH-INTERNATIONAL website continues to attract an average of 200 visitors per day. It is playing a major role in making the general public aware of our activities, for communicating between chapters and for making connections with needy people in third-world countries. Indeed, inquiries have been coming in from around the world.

Chuck recently redesigned the layout of the site to make it more user-friendly. With one click you can access information about upcoming trips, learn about chapter activities or leave a message.

In one recent note, Dr. Lydia-Glover-

Nyador, an ophthalmologist working with a group called FAME (their home office is in Ohio), requested donations of used eye care equipment—a slit lamp, keratometer, retinoscope, etc. Her e-mail is: lnyador@africaonline.com.gh.

Optometrist Mike DeRosier wrote on behalf of people in Samoa. They are seeking Keystone Telebinoculars as an alternative means of screening school-age children. Dr. DeRosier can be reached at dpvc@juno.com.

"The VOSH website is only as good as the information/news/letters/photos you send in," says Chuck. "Please keep us updated." You can contact Chuck through the message board on our website or at chuck-jan@cyberdude.com.

* * * * *

WHAT ABOUT MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE?

Most of us don't like to think about the unlikely situation of being injured or even dying while traveling and so we dismiss such thoughts. Still, it can happen.

Whether you're an active VOSH'er or an anytime traveler, we'd like to bring to your attention the existence of a medical evacuation service for anyone traveling 150 miles or more from their permanent residence.

Essentially, MEDJET ASSISTANCE provides a ticket home in the event of a medical crisis or death. The service provides 24-hour-per-day, 365-day-per-year aid from anywhere around the world. Membership benefits include:

1. Air medical evacuation and repatriation services, whether or not there's a medical necessity, except within 150 miles of your home or while traveling in countries where US Dept. of State travel restrictions apply.
2. Transport services from the home hospital to specialty hospitals throughout the US.
3. Worldwide medical referrals and monitoring of member's medical condition
4. Worldwide legal referral
5. Translation assistance with foreign medical reports
6. Emergency message transmission
7. Travel and cultural information
8. Comprehensive pre-travel medicine consultations.

Annual membership cost is \$150 (individual) or \$225 (family). You must be under age 75 to qualify, but special membership is available for current MEDJET ASSISTANCE members who have reached their 75th birthday.

For further details contact:

MEDJET ASSISTANCE, PO Box 610629, Birmingham, AL 35261-0629. Telephone: 1-800-963-3538. Their website: www.medjetassistance.com

Ruth Berkling in the hills of Honduras

Continued from page 1

They returned that same October and have been returning at least once, sometimes twice a year, ever since. The team continues to see between 3,000 and 4,000 patients on each mission. Clinic venues change each time in order to help needy people from different areas.

Ruth's role as in-country liaison has been vital to the ongoing success of the program, although after so many years of working closely with Dr. Jeff Marshall (he coordinates the trips from the states), many of the details no longer need to be discussed. What is shared is talk about family and close friendship, even kinship, as Dr. Marshall is godfather to Ruth's middle son.

The everyday rhythm of Ruth's life was suddenly and severely impacted when Arnold died in a car accident in 1980. The boys were in college by then, but their daughter was only seven.

Rather than pack up and return home, Ruth remained in her adopted country. She was named Honorary Consul for Germany for eight provinces in 1983, a post which she continues to hold.

Nor did Ruth give up her efforts on behalf of the needy in Honduras. She set about forming a charitable foundation, the *Fundacion Para Servicios Medicos Voluntarios* (Foundation for Voluntary Medical Services) and pushed for ophthalmological services starting in 1984.

The *Fundacion* now provides 40 to 50 surgeries annually.

And, thanks again to her organization's persistent campaigning, there is now a permanent eye clinic in San Pedro Sula that helps needy people with eye problems throughout the year. The two-story building has approximately 2,200 square feet on each floor, with areas for examining, dispensing, prepping, surgery, post-op, etc. Ruth can be found at the clinic six days a week.

"The longer you work with the poor, the more aware you become of the tremendous needs," says Ruth. So, two years ago, her *Fundacion* started yet another clinic, one for general medicine, complete with a drugstore offering basic medications.

"Supposedly public hospitals treat the poor of our country for nothing," says Ruth, "but they never have medicine. It is only available at the very private, expensive drugstores. I can tell you at this moment we are able to supply our patients with diabetes and high blood pressure medicines."

Two years ago, the *Fundacion Para Servicios Medicos Voluntarios* was invited to join VOSH-INTERNATIONAL as VOSH-Honduras. Along with her far too numerous other duties, Ruth Berkling continues to work hard to keep that relationship strong.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL

Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity

For further information, call Toll-Free

1-877-VOSHers

or visit our website:

www.VOSH.org

* * * *

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL is a voluntary non-profit organization whose primary goal is to facilitate the provision of vision care worldwide to people who can neither afford nor obtain such care.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL accomplishes this goal by service as a coordinating body for affiliated chapters, by administratively supporting activities of chapters and members and by actively promoting the formation of new chapters and new members.

Currently there are 23 state chapters, three of which are composed of two or more states. In addition, there are 14 active student chapters, as well as one each in Mexico, Canada and Honduras.

PRESIDENT

Dr. Jeffrey C. Marshall
PO Box 19028, Indianapolis, IN 46219
317-322-7788 drjcm@att.net

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Dr. Harry I. Zeltzer
PO Box 209, Ipswich, MA 01938
978-356-0447
harriyeltzer@mediaone.net

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Dr. Paul Anthony
#3 Otterwood Dr., Springfield, IL 62707
217-787-6162 panthony@motion.net

Dr. Nelson Edwards
136 East Grand River, Fowlerville, MI 48836
517-223-9988
EYECARE@voyager.net

Dr. Stuart Frank
6912 176th St., SW, Edmonds, WA 98026-5616
425-742-8589 frank.s@ghc.org

Dr. Patti Fuhr
5720 11th Avenue South,
Birmingham, AL 35222 205-933-8101/ex.5105
pfuhr@mindspring.com

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Charles H. Covington, Sr.
102 Oak View Circle, Lake Mary, FL 32746
407-330-5261
VOSHFlorida@hotmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Zabelle D'Amico
Box 41, Holden, MA 01520
508-829-2033

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL

Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity

Dr. Jeffrey Marshall

PO Box 19028

Indianapolis, IN 46219

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

More VOSH news

Your contributions and memberships

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL is a 501-(c)-3 corporation, meaning that all contributions are tax-deductible.

Our primary source of income is membership and Chapter dues. We encourage optometrists to join and help us give this added service as a part of our professional lives. We also welcome other professionals and laypeople who share our desire to help those less fortunate obtain better sight.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL dues are \$30 per year. Chapter dues are \$100 per year. Please send dues or contributions to:

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL

C/O Charles Covington, Treasurer
102 Oak View Circle,
Lake Mary, FL 32746

Be sure to include your name, address, telephone and e-mail if you have one.

For more information:

call TOLL FREE 1-877-VOSHers or
visit our website: www.VOSH.org

Dues increase voted

At the October V/I Annual Meeting, annual dues were raised slightly to meet the growing cost of providing services and to implement a program of travel scholarships to student chapters.

Individual memberships are now \$30 per year. Chapter dues will be \$100 per year.

Pass the newsletter along

Please share your newsletter by displaying it in your office or sending it to interested people. You can refer others to our website where some of the articles from the newsletter will be routinely posted: www.VOSH.org

Next year's
VOSH/INTERNATIONAL
ANNUAL MEETING

will be held in

Bradenton, Florida

October 26, 27, 2001

For further information contact:

Jeff Marshall, OD drjcm@att.net