

From Ship to Shore...

September 2003



Hello everyone!

It seems like I just finished writing last month's newsletter – time has really flown by in the past few weeks! Our outreach in Belize continues to go well. Our medical team are finding plenty of people in need of care. We have a special orthopedics team that has flown down from the Mercy Ships base in Texas to do surgeries such as correcting club feet and healing gunshot wounds. Our optical clinic has been dispersing eyeglasses and treating several cases of pinkeye. Perhaps our dental team has been the busiest of all; after only three weeks they have seen over 300 patients! The surgeons onboard are kept busy doing approximately 5 cataract surgeries each day. It is wonderful to see so many people released from chains that have bound them for years!

One of the things I really appreciate about Mercy Ships is that a lot of attention is devoted to the individual. The patients that come to have surgery are not simply statistics for the brochures; they are known by name. One way that this is played out is that each patient is “assigned” a crew member who will pray with him and meet with him before the surgery. I was given a name, Elaine Vaughn, and told that she would be having surgery on a particular day. I went to the pre-op unit that morning and met her. We prayed together and then walked into the ship, downstairs to the operating room, and prepared her for surgery. In that time, Elaine ministered to me in so many ways. Here in front of me was a woman who for years could only see shadows because of the thickness of the cataracts in her eyes, yet she was so full of joy and hope. She talked about her family and how excited her grandkids were that she would be able to see again. Elaine reminded me that external circumstances do not have to dictate the condition of the heart.



Just this past weekend I visited an orphanage with a group from the ship. We drove over an hour through the sporadically-paved roads of Belize to an orphanage called King's Children's Home. Almost 60 children live in that home, ranging in age from little babies to seventeen year-olds. When we got there, we were ushered into a room which, quite honestly, made me extremely uncomfortable. The air was so stale that a stench of urine filled it. The couches and chairs were all torn up with

sharp springs sticking out of them. Only about half of the walls remained intact; termites had eaten through the rest of it. There must have been over 200 flies feeding off of the spilt drinks and crumbs that were all over the floor. I had a very sad impression of the orphanage within the first few minutes of our visit. Once we met the kids, however, my impression was completely changed. These were some of the happiest, most well-adjusted, loving and affectionate children I have met. We spent the entire day playing, reading books, and just having fun together. I learned so much that day about what kids really need, compared to what I thought they needed. The staff (they should really be called “parents”) at the orphanage poured out unconditional love on these 60 children constantly. The kids had stability, attention, and love from the staff, as well as sound teaching from the Bible. I was so impressed by the time we left, as well as humbled.



In just one more month I will officially join DTS (Discipleship Training School) staff onboard the *Caribbean Mercy*! I feel as if I have been anticipating this change for a long time now, and I am ready to transition over! We four staff members have been getting together once a week to discuss the upcoming school and pray for the sixteen students who will arrive in mid-November. I'd like to ask you to please join me in praying for the students; I certainly want all of them to experience all I did during my DTS last year! Also, please pray that I would continue to grow closer to the Lord, as He will be my Rock when things get crazy as the school starts!

Thank you all for your prayers and support!

Love,
Katie