



Registered association for the promotion
of medical care and social support in
Northern Samar, Philippines

Bugko, April 2010

Dear members, dear friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!



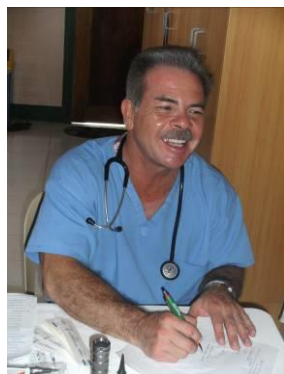
I'd like to open this year's newsletter with this picture of one of our children. One after the other... these were the events of the first three months of the new year.

I returned to Bugko on January 8th, and on January 17th, our medical/surgical mission with doctors from the USA began. We had three doctors here: Dr. James M., Colorado; Dr. Michael R., Colorado; and Dr. Bobbi A., also from Colorado. As in the previous year, we cooperated with ISM (International Surgical Mission), where doctors apply for volunteer assignments abroad. What was new this year was that our mission lasted a full six days! From early morning until late at night. We were able to examine 712 patients and operate on 46 outpatients in our new operating room. During the operations, the doctors were also supported on one day by a doctor from Kuwait and a plastic surgeon from Manila (St. Luke's Hospital). So, it was a very international experience. There had never been a medical mission lasting almost an entire week in Bugko before, and as always, patients came from surrounding villages, some even being brought from far away by jeepny (a type of bus). They endured waits of over eight hours just to be examined by the American doctors. Our volunteers worked nonstop and showed no signs of fatigue. They registered patients, helped with translations, assisted in the operating room, cleaned instruments, and dispensed medications. All medications were sponsored by the doctors from the USA. Four newly qualified nurses from Manila were also there, gaining their first practical experience here, also on a volunteer basis. Our patients were thrilled because the doctors spent so much time with each individual patient, and patients here aren't used to such care from local doctors. The new operating room proved to be excellent, both in size and functionality. Dr. Radway, who oversees the organization in the USA, contacted

us immediately after the team returned to the USA and promised us that he would definitely come back to Bugko next year. I think the following pictures reflect this extraordinary mission quite well:



Dr. James & Dr. Bobbi



Dr. Michael



Patients came from all over



Examination



During Surgeries

The complete Team



The crowning moment in Manila was receiving our new SUV. This was made possible thanks to the continued support of the German Dental Aid Organization (HDZ). Now we have a safe vehicle for a long time to come.



From February 9th to 15th, Dr. de Cassan from the German Dentists' Aid Organization came to us again to set up a dental prophylaxis program here in Bugko and to train our volunteers. The days were characterized by theory and even more practice. The volunteers were completely captivated by the wealth of information they received. Dr. de Cassan initiated the program based on his experiences here on our dental mission in September. The dental status

of a large section of the population here is catastrophic. There are several reasons for this, but the main one is that the population is not adequately supplied with fluoride. The drinking water has no fluoride content, the food does not, and teeth are only inadequately cared for or not cared for at all. You can imagine the consequences. Many very young people here have an incomplete set of teeth or no teeth at all. Dr. de Cassan put a lot of effort into training our volunteers, who will now continue the program and train more and more Bukoano in proper dental and oral hygiene and provide them with fluoride. The fluoride must therefore be added externally, and this is possible through fluoridated salt, medications, fluoride gel, and fluoridated toothpaste. The program is unique in the Philippines because fluoridated salt is not available here, which is a simple and effective way to provide people with fluoride. The German Dentists' Aid Organization regularly supplies us with the salt so that we can put the program on a "sound footing." We are proud to now have 10 "mini dentists" who have made it their mission to change the dental status here in Bugko.

Theory:



Praxis



On February 12 and 13, 10 patients with cleft lips underwent surgery in our new operating room. Dr. Hildegardes Dineros of St. Luke Medical Center traveled from Manila to perform the surgery and gave these patients a new face as a Valentine's Day gift through his "Smile for Ever" program. This ongoing program aims to make Northern Samar free of cleft lips and palates.



On February 16, our new buildings (training and nutrition center and diagnostic center) were inaugurated by our local Bishop Emmanuel C. Trance (Bishop of Catarman). Fortunately, Dr. de Cassan was still here to inaugurate the new diagnostic center as a representative of the HDZ. Many guests came from near and far, and it was a thoroughly successful celebration.



On March 2, I received my long-awaited permanent residency permit. Now I no longer have to worry every two years about whether my visa will be renewed. This was made possible by the head of the immigration office in Manila, who personally advocated for me.



And then on March 3rd, my dear parents, who work tirelessly for our project here, arrived. They finally wanted to get a personal impression of the situation here and our work on site. The patients were happy to meet an orthopedic specialist, as many of the patients come with shoulder, knee, and back problems. There isn't an orthopedic specialist in all of Northern Samar, and word quickly got around who was running the consultation. The patients were happy to wait a long time for their specialist, who was able to provide immediate relief for many of them. They were also able to see our children in the nutrition program. They will tell you about their experiences in their own report, which immediately follows mine.



The trip is over, but the memories of many harrowing, yet also beautiful, experiences remain vivid. Therefore, we want to tell you about our three weeks in the Philippines and share a little of them with you.

After a pleasant flight with KLM, we arrived in Manila and were greeted with joy by Sabine and Sr. Veronica! After lunch at a small restaurant, to which Mr. Lee—you know him from the reports—had invited us, we went on our first city tour, Intramuros, the old Spanish district. There, the execution of the last resistance fighter, Dr. Jose Rizal, is impressively documented. We also saw Fort Santiago, built in the 16th century as a military base and still well preserved. It is often used as an open-air theater. A horse-drawn carriage ride along the fortress walls and palaces and a visit to the cathedral were also part of our sightseeing program. We also saw the historic bamboo organ (the only one in the world) in Las Pinas, which, incidentally, was restored by Johannes Klais from Bonn in 1972.

The next day, we flew on to our final destination, Catarman, and after a somewhat adventurous car ride, we arrived in Bugko. There, we were greeted by Manay Caring (Sr. Veronica's sister) and Vilma, a volunteer, with floral wreaths and a welcome poster specially displayed for us.



The next evening, we met the other volunteers, who had prepared a typical celebration with Filipino dances. In this cheerful and welcoming atmosphere, we immediately felt at home and at home!

The first day of work in the outpatient clinic showed us the frightening illnesses Sabine and Sister Veronica are confronted with every day: open

eczema on their legs, tumors of unknown origin, Parkinson's disease that had been untreated for two years (the patient was coming to the clinic for the first time), a cough, and a fever. The orthopedic problems were the least of their problems, and the "German Doctor" treated them so successfully that the next day all family members with similar illnesses came in. We were astonished by the patience and composure with which the patients waited and were grateful for the help.

To quote Jean de la Bruyere: "It's a joy to look into the eyes of the person you've just helped."

Sabine organized the consultation process just as we do here in Germany. A medical record is created for each patient, in which the test results and medications are recorded. This allows the progression of the illness to be closely monitored.

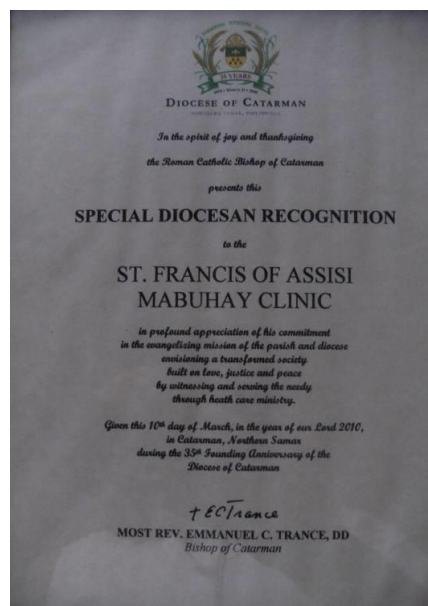
During a tour of the village, we also experienced the people's gratitude. A smile, a friendly wave, is returned with shining eyes.

Conditions in the huts themselves are unimaginable for us; for example, parents sleep on the bare floor with seven children in one room (estimated at 2.5 x 3 meters)! Everything is clean and, in keeping with the space, even tidy. We also witnessed a meal being prepared for children in the nutrition program. A mother cooks a meal for ten children on a stone fire pit. The children wait patiently until the food is on their plates, and then we could see how they enjoyed it! Sabine prepares a weekly ration of food for each family, and one of the volunteers is always in the hut where the food is being cooked to ensure that the children actually get something to eat!

These volunteers, young women and men, also support Sabine very enthusiastically in other activities, such as dental prophylaxis. With a great deal of empathy, they implement what they have learned from Dr. de Cassan.

At the Cartarman Hospital, all we wanted was to "get out" as quickly as possible. Before entering the operating room, we were asked to take off our shoes, but a cat was running around unhindered! The hospital rooms were only sparsely equipped, just a stretcher and a small table. Everything else had to be brought by the relatives. The doctors welcomed us very warmly; they dropped everything for a chat. Here, too, we could feel the appreciation for Sabine.

We also experienced recognition in a very moving moment for us. During a celebration marking the 35th anniversary of the Diocese of Northern Samar, to which the bishop had invited us, Sabine and Sr. Veronica were officially presented with a certificate for their work in Bugko!



During our stay in Bugko, we were repeatedly reminded of how important and meaningful our daughter's work and presence there is. We were also very happy to meet Patrick, whom many of you will surely remember from our annual general meeting.



He came for a blood sugar check. Unfortunately, his blood sugar wasn't yet properly regulated, but this was corrected immediately in consultation with the internist in Catarman. Due to his diabetes, he has developed neuropathy with impaired musculoskeletal function. But this little guy, who is really small for his age (12 years old), has such a strong will that we have hope for improvement here as well. In April, he will be returning to Sabine for four weeks, and when school starts in June, he will go to boarding school with the brothers of an Italian religious order. We met his personal supervisor, a young priest, during the diocesan celebration and know he is in good hands! We would have loved to take him home with us!

After these often-harrowing experiences, the stay in Bohol, another island, was very restorative. Sabine had thoughtfully planned everything for us. A trip to the Chocolate Hills (over 1200 uniform hills, which are brown because of the sun's rays), also led us to the smallest monkeys in the world, Tarsier, the biggest thing about them are the eyes.



We particularly enjoyed a boat tour on the Loboc River with lunch and music to the waterfalls. The visit to the old Baclayon Church, built by Jesuits in the 16th century, and the "Blood Contact" monument (depicting the brotherhood between Spain and the Philippines) were very interesting. Even though we had to get up at 5:00 a.m., the boat trip to see the dolphins was an experience we didn't want to miss.

In summary, we are happy and glad to have finally made this trip. It was very important to see everything with our own eyes. We are proud of our daughter! And grateful for the help she receives from Sister Veronica, the local doctors, the volunteers, and many others. It is also reassuring to know that she is not alone.

We are already planning our next stay!

Best regards

Anne and Bernd Korth

Now it's a double letter with many events, and I also send you my warmest greetings from Bugko.

Yours,

Sabine Korth

Salamat (thank you) from Bugko!

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