

# THE CORNERSTONE FOUNDATION

*"...the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Mt. 21:42*

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***"...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."***

Hebrews 12: 1-2

In order to "run with patience the race that is set before us," sometimes I think it's probably a good thing to look at your job like those brave but benighted soldiers of "The Charge of the Light Brigade"--*Theirs not to make reply. Theirs not to reason why. Theirs but to do and die. Into the valley of Death rode the six hundred.*

It's sometimes better just to show up and do what you're sent to do, not questioning why. If I went to work with my own iron-clad battle plan for how everything had to turn out, I'd usually come home from work pretty defeated. If I went to work expecting all of the patients to be gracious, lovable, and sweet smelling, then most days would be a pretty big disappointment. So, that's how I went to work this morning, not expecting very much, just showing up to do what I'm sent to do.

Rosanne had to finish working on licensing documentation for the Ministry of Education for the school before she could go to clinic. This is the kind of behind-the-scenes and generally thankless work, without which no school or hospital, business, etc. can go on. It would take her at least another half hour, so I thought I'd best go in early and see what I could work through by myself.

My general philosophy of not expecting things to go according to my own plan was validated right off. As I passed through the gate to the Hospital, Don Inez, the guard on duty at the gate, flagged me down to let me know that a young man had gone up to the Emergency Room with his ear cut off and armed with a gun.



gate and guard station at Hospital Loma de Luz

I didn't want to let the motorcycle die (since I wasn't sure I could get it started again), so I yelled over the noise of the two-stroke engine to Don Inez, "Why did you let him through?" He yelled back, "Because his ear was cut off." I said, "No, but why did you let him through with a gun?" Inez shouted back, "Because he had a gun." I could tell that this was about as far as I was going to get before running out of gas or doing a brain transplant on Don Inez, so I smiled and nodded as if this reasoning made all the sense in the world... (which in a way it did), and went on up the hill toward the hospital. Half way up the hill I met Joel Tumilson coming down the hill in his truck. He'd been trying to radio me that there was this guy in the E.R. with a gun whose ear had been all but amputated with a machete. Joel was going to look for the police in Balfate (since the two policemen assigned to our region don't have a phone or a car, or even an official bicycle).

While Joel headed off on that mission, I proceeded to the hospital. I wasn't sure where in the Hospital the Vincent van Gogh-look-alike guy was, so I parked my motorcycle up at the Bodega and said a little prayer as I went down the steps to the Hospital to look for him. Immediately upon entering the Hospital, I met two of the Honduran nurses in the hallway outside the Emergency Room, fluttering in place like two sparrows who'd been dispossessed of their nest by a starling. They both had their hands clasped in front of them and they both pointed with their eyes to the Emergency Room door and said in unison, "He has a gun."

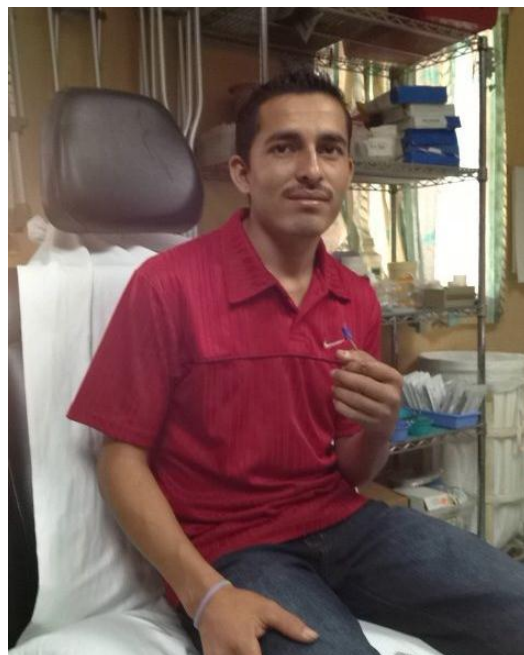
It's not every day that we have to deal with someone in the hospital with a gun, but it wasn't the first either. So far, I've never had to use my cool, complex Kung Fu moves to disarm such fun guys (which is a good thing since I don't think I have any cool Kung Fu moves). So far it has worked out pretty well just to show up, start talking, and for the most part, stick to the obvious: *OK, what's your name? OK, Vincent, it looks like someone was trying to chop your head off and just got your ear. Oh? An accident? OK. Cut yourself shaving? All right. So you might think about switching to an electric razor. But the thing is, I don't really care right now how you got separated from your ear. I'm here to put it back on. But nobody's going to take care of you until you put that gun away.* Vincent doesn't look at me, but just stares straight ahead, glaring at some fixed point in the middle distance. Maybe there is a fly over there on the suture and plaster shelf that he's really mad at. Making no sudden moves I walk around the end of the gurney to Vincent's un-chopped, good ear and state the obvious again. *So, listen, Vincent, you're not going to hear too well on that other side until we put your ear back on. And, nobody's going to hurt you here, but I'm not doing anything until you give me the gun.*

Vincent never quits glaring at the far wall, but slowly leans forward and reaches behind him as if he's in a trance but driven to scratch something back there. From somewhere tucked into his scrawny posterior he pulls out a surprisingly big .357 magnum revolver and is handing it to me (at least I hope that's what he's doing) when Barney and Gomer, our local constabulary, with impeccable timing, come crashing through the door. I tell them, "Everything is *tranquilo*. Let's all take a deep breath and take our fingers out of those trigger guards. Vincent here was just handing over his gun. You'll have to wait a bit. I've got to put his ear back on before he can go anywhere."

I learn that Vincent had been on a bit of a tear in the past couple of days, breaking into people's houses and robbing them, and hitting Lorenzo's mama on the head with a rock, ... which did not endear him to the people of Rio Esteban, particularly Lorenzo. (This might have had something to do with his current need for medical attention...? who knows? I'm just saying.) Additionally I learn that Vincent is also wanted for armed robbery, murder, assault with a deadly weapon, and other generally antisocial undertakings. But without his gun, and handcuffed to the gurney rail, he just looks like a scared, skinny, dirty kid to me. So while I'm injecting local anesthetic and cleaning and piecing

together the various parts of his ear and face, it occurs to me that whether I feel like it or not (which I did not), I should try to convey the good news of a savior. He's going to need it where he's going. I continued with the same vein of stating the obvious—that clearly he couldn't go on like this. He couldn't go on with this brilliant life plan of hiding in the bushes, hitting nice little old ladies on the head with rocks, and getting chased around a village by irate townsfolk with machetes. He would end up in prison or in hell or both. Since Vincent's responses were limited to single words or monosyllabic grunts, my attempt at a pointed gospel conversation seemed to me to be coming off more like a hellfire and brimstone lecture. And since by now Rosanne was tapping her foot at the door to ever so sweetly let me know that the next patient was on the operating table and ready to go to sleep, I left the rest of the sewing and the rest of the attempted gospel sharing in Joel Tumlison's capable hands.

I went off down the hall to the operating room where another young man with a machete injury awaited.



*Juan (at a follow-up appointment)*

This one (Juan) had suffered his injuries the day before under less antisocial though similarly intellectually questionable circumstances. He had been opening a coconut with his ever handy and always extremely sharp machete when he was distracted on the downswing by someone calling his name. Since roughly a third of the village is named *Juan*, it was not clear why he assumed that they were actually calling *him*. But the result was going to be a couple of hours of putting bones and tendons

back together, followed by months of hard work, therapy, and healing.

By just after noon Rosanne and I had completed these repairs, as well as attended 3 or 4 consults or follow-up patients in clinic, and we had one more operation to do before finding out what the rest of the afternoon would have in store. I gallantly suggested to Rosanne that if she would get the next patient ready for surgery I would run home and bring back something for lunch. My motivation was only partly that breakfast had clearly passed us by and lunch would soon do the same unless decisive steps were taken. But the greater part of my drive to jump on my motorcycle and go off foraging for sustenance was that I simply needed a break from the usual suspects. All of the patients I had seen that day were suffering from their own chronic and acute bad decisions. We, of course, treated them as we would have wanted to be treated. Who knows? They might have been the Lord in disguise. But if they were, they didn't act much like Him, and my attitude was suffering.

Now to be a little more serious for a moment, I really, really want to see Honduras change, to shine for the Lord among the nations. God could do that, you know. He could make of these people a great force for good, a brilliant example of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. But the people we dealt with today had so far *up* to climb just to reach *functional*, that "*brilliance*" seems as far away as the stars.

Recently my father forwarded to me a link to a YouTube video of what is probably the coolest and classiest flash mob yet filmed. When I opened the link it gave me an illustration of what I want for Honduras, and what seems often so far away. The video begins with a tuxedoed bass violin player in a busy plaza of a European city--the Placa de Sant Roc in Sabadell, Spain. He seems to be a street musician performing alone. He is playing the opening strains to Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, "Ode to Joy." Quickly and without explanation, other musicians begin to step up and join him, and the passers-by begin to pay attention. More and more musicians arrive, pulling their instruments out and coming from all directions. Where minutes before lonely, busy, and stressed-out looking people--bent on their own individual missions in their own separate material lives--had passed each other by, a crowd gathers. Within minutes the spectators, the passers-by, the individual musicians and the choir are transformed into something new--a community connected and lifted up, for a few brief moments, sharing the joy of the beautiful music. Without consciously recognizing it, their spirits together offer up the gift of praise to the God who makes such

beauty possible. It's a wonderful thing. It chokes you up. It takes your breath away, and it makes me wonder, *If God can do that with glorious music in a public square in a materialist, secular society, how much more can He do, how much more will He do? Couldn't this poor nation be lifted up like that?*

Then I remember just how far removed our neighbors walking the dirt roads of Honduras are from the educational and cultural background of those crossing a city square in Spain. How can they ever get there? I rode off from the hospital, in part, to get a break from the tedium of the job of caring for people so...so basic, so crude, and so far from being able to recognize Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony.

The ride isn't very long from the hospital to my house, about five minutes, depending on how fast or slow I take it. Under the weight and glare of the noonday sun, the desire to get away from the hospital, and the pressure to get back quickly, I wasn't exactly dawdling. Still, as I get near the Children's Centre I routinely slow down, and as I turned the corner just beyond that, I slowed even further to watch a little parade that was just then passing my driveway around the bend.

School had let out for the kindergarten about 15 minutes earlier, and, now meandering down the road, here comes the Light Brigade of 5, 6, and 7 year olds who are in school at El Camino and live at the Children's Centre.

I stopped in the road to watch as they passed by.



*Children's Light Brigade*

Out front marched Rony, all three feet tall of him, shirt tail out, cap on crooked, and head thrown back while swinging his arms like a drum major leading the band. He made a funny face and waved a salute. Ten feet back straggled Felix and Kevin Josue. One was pulling on a roadside flower, and the other was

throwing a roadside rock at a mildly curious roadside horse. Another 20 feet further back were the ladies--little Maria holding the hands of Leydi and Yessinia, the chaperones from the school to the Children's Centre. As they passed by, so full of the potential and the wonder of God's creation, I thought, "Here is the future and the hope for Honduras." And I swear I could hear the faint strains from Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup>.

I've thought a lot about that since then, the juxtaposition of the current crude and disappointing level of the common man or woman on the highways and byways of Honduras-- men and women so limited by poverty of education, upbringing, and opportunities, men and women so injured and limited by their own bad decisions... compared to the hope and potential of those young students joyously marching down that dusty road. How will the people of Honduras be lifted up above their beginnings, lifted up to offer the gift of their lives in praise to the God who makes such beauty possible? To tell you the truth, I don't have the whole answer. But I know that God could do a thing like that. And I remember what my part is and what your part is. *Seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race which is set before us.* We keep on caring for the unlovely in Christ's name at Loma de Luz, and we also do the hard work behind the scenes to teach and disciple these little ones in Christ's name. We'll see what God will make of it. May He daily grant us each the patient endurance to put one foot in front of the other and stay in the race.

God's grace,

Jeff McKenney, M.D.

## News and Needs

**Welcome** to new missionary Dr. Judy Blumhofer. Dr. Judy, a pediatrician, joined the missionary staff of Hospital Loma de Luz in August. She hails from the Midwest but completed her training in Massachusetts and considers both of those places home. Now it looks like the north coast of Honduras is a third place she is making herself at home. We are blessed to have her.

**Praise** - In our last newsletter you read about how the Honduran Finance Ministry, without warning, revoked APAH's / Loma de Luz's charitable status--shocking and dismaying us and also making it impossible for us to get shipping containers--four of which were just arriving at that

time--out of port, costing hundreds of dollars a day in port fees. With praise and thanks, I can tell you that we now have our non-profit status renewed, all of the paperwork and political hassles ironed out, and the containers out of port and unloaded at Loma de Luz. Interestingly, within a week of finally getting the last paperwork redone, the highest levels of the Finance Ministry were sacked for corruption. Go figure?? Still, the extra costs / fines / port rental / extra lawyer work / etc. will cost us at least \$12,000 before it is all said and done, but God provides. And the materials and equipment on those containers are a blessing. Thank you for praying. Praise the Lord.

**Video** A short video about the work of our ministry was recently put together for the Honduran government so that officials who have never visited us can get a better idea of what goes on at Loma de Luz. The original video is in Spanish, but an English-language version is being made. If you'd like to see it and/or share it with friends, church groups, or civics organizations, you should be able to find it with this link:

[The Cornerstone Foundation - Hospital Loma de Luz](#)

**Personnel** Please pray for more nurses, family practice doctors, and teachers who are willing to make a commitment of at least one school year. We also need a missionary who could supervise the hospital's commercial kitchen with a commitment of at least 6 months.

**Some Needed Items** include decongestant medications, chewable children's vitamins, 5 DVD players and TVs (for patient rooms) and DVDs (G or PG only), 18 gallon Rubbermaid bins with lids (for supply storage), wheelchairs, and dorm-size refrigerators. For a longer list of needed supplies and equipment, see our web site. ([www.crstone.org](http://www.crstone.org)).

**Prayer** This is crucial. The Cornerstone Foundation board of directors sets Thursdays aside as days in particular for us to focus on praying for Loma de Luz. If you'd like to join us in remembering to pray for LdL with particular intentionality on Thursdays, do so. But--whenever you can pray, whatever day of the week or time of day--please keep praying. It makes a greater difference than you know. It makes a greater difference than we know too, but sometimes God grants us a glimpse of just how important it is, and those glimpses are usually kind of staggering.

My pastor has on many occasions said things which were so good that I wrote them down in the back cover of my Bible. One is his advice that when times are hard and confusing and you can't see more

than a few inches ahead on the path, you don't have to know everything --"just do the next right thing." Wherever you are on your journey at this moment, may the Lord sustain you as you "do the next right thing" with a small step here and then another step there.

And as you do this, putting one foot in front of the other, may He grant you a taste of the joy set before us so that you may keep running your race--like Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him," kept running His race straight toward the cross and then beyond it.

May the Lord bless you.

--Sally Mahoney for Cornerstone Foundation



*typical scene along the coast highway*