



Dear Friends of Rotaplast

We have a very international team on the road to Tunuyan Argentina. Here are reports from PDG Mary Margaret Fleming from the Monterey area who is acting as our journalist. This trip was underwritten by a donation from Conrad Walas. We want to give him our thanks for taking such a big step to help children.

Anita Stangl
Executive Director

ROTAPLAST DAILY LOG/SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 2000

Early to rise, board bus to hospital at 7:00 am to pick-up the seven clinic boxes, then on to the Army Base at Tupungato (about an hour drive). The Base is a large, clean, and well maintained facility which lends itself perfectly to our purpose.

In only one hour, the non-medical team of volunteers, most of whom have only just met, quickly set-up admitting, plastic surgeon, pediatric, dental, anesthesiology, genetic, and photographic rooms in a very systematic method; assuring organized sequence for careful and thorough examinations and photos of patients.

Amid a flurry of activity, the people with cleft and other disfigurements have gathered with their families, a solemn and tired congregation of parents and friends who have come from as far away as Peru. They are holding their babies/children/young adults closely, deep in thought, filled with anxiety and hope, and are waiting their turn for the magic of Rotaplast to release their loved ones from the confinement and isolation that accompanies visible disfigurement.

At 8:30 am the process starts with admitting those already gathered. By 9:00 am it is interesting to observe all the surgeons. Stationed in the examining room, Chief Surgeon, Dr. Angelo Capozzi (California), Dr. Karl-Gunter Weise (Germany), Dr. German Garcia (who drove across The Andes from Chili), and a surgeon from Mendoza, provide a close up view the process. This 10-member international volunteer medical team carefully

examined each of the 97 candidates -- accompanied by their silent partners, the highly qualified nurse contingent of our Team, directed by competent Head Nurse, Evelyn Abad. Working harmoniously, the surgeons consulted with each other to reach a balanced decision. Additionally, they consulted with a local speech therapist to assure that vital follow-up is available and will occur. Most often heard from the surgeons is the necessity of the support of local periodontists. The Spanish/English interpreters are invaluable as they are precise and skillful in answering the questions of the doctors and the parents. When the doctor announces surgery for a candidate, parents and child maintain dignity, but jubilant smiles and/or tears are seen in every pair of eyes (including many Team members). It is a heart wrenching sight when patients are rejected due to other medical complications, a cold, etc.

Of special note --dentists have examined 54 patients. By 4:00 pm, at the close of the examinations, 63 patients have been qualified for surgery.

It is a long day, and this team of seven non-medical volunteers gather. In a flurry of activity they pack-up the medical records and supplies to be carried back to the hospital in Tunuyan; at the same time the medical team is selecting a date and time for each surgery. Outdoors the sun shines brilliantly on the patients (and their families) who sit quietly, filled with joy and anticipation, plus the warm glow of satisfaction that comes with the knowledge that they have achieved their goal, and their surgery will be performed this coming week. Concurrently, the Army Band is parading, lending a welcome and lively musical diversion to the stress filled day.

The Team Leader, Renato Piombi, announces to the waiting patients the specific day of their surgery, and that they will be housed and fed at the Army Base, then bussed in to Tunuyan the day of their surgery ... courtesy of the Tupungato Rotary Club.

The bus arrives at 6:00 pm and this cohesive and tired 26-member Team heads back to Tunuyan. The Nursing Staff will go directly to the Hospital to set up in advance for Sunday's surgeries. Others are excused. The main contingent gathers at the restaurant for another wonderful (late) dinner hosted by the Tupungato Rotary Club.

Submitted by Mary Margaret Fleming

Journalist, Tunuyan, Argentina

DAILY LOG/SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2000

As we enter the Tunuyan Hospital we are greeted by a large white banner

"Bienvenidos Rotaplast 2000," "Since Five Year Ago We Have Been Sharing The Same Aim: 'A Child's Smile.'" (The Spanish translation follows on the below two lines).

There is a bevy of activity. Everyone has changed into hospital scrubs. Records keeper, Hank White (Salinas, CA) is attentively and masterfully checking patient files. Nurses are hustling about to assure "all systems go." Surgeons are checking their schedules and reviewing charts. Pediatricians Urda Gottschalk (Germany), Eric Patrick (San Francisco, CA), and Dr. Glen Molyneaux (also Assistant Team Leader-Santa Rosa, CA) carefully examine patients for the final time before surgery; always reserving time to reassure parents with a gracious smile, nod, or loving pat on the shoulder.

Sylvia Iselin (volunteer, San Francisco, CA) attends to the needs of anxious parents, calming and comforting them in the most gentle and gracious manner -- and often distributing little golden wrapped delicious candy treats from her pocket. Quartermaster Robert Barbaro (Rhonert Park, CA), who carries with him a smile to give to everyone he meets, is hustling about accommodating many needs and sterilizing all instruments. Towering above the crowd, always with a warm, generous, proud, and friendly smile is our Team Leader, Renato Piombi (bi-lingual Spanish, Belmont, CA); he makes everyone's request a reality in the shortest possible time -- while imparting the feeling that it is his privilege to serve you.

We have been granted 3 surgery rooms (the hospital has saved a 4th for their own local emergencies). Two brilliant red swinging doors, each with a large porthole window welcome you to an operating room that measures about 17'x16'. It has white tile walls, a painted white 8' H. ceiling, and light brown granite floor. Affixed to the ceiling are two large circular surgical lights and four, 2-tube fluorescent fixtures. The high narrow windows are covered by 1" W. white vertical blinds. As you would expect, the room is immaculate. It is extremely warm today so free standing fans have been added (fans regularly are not allowed in a U.S. operating room). Contained within is an operating table, three carts on wheels, and an anesthesiology machine accompanied by a tall, thin cylindrical back-up tank.

Surgeons and nurses don their surgical hats, masks, and slip-ons to cover their shoes, The anesthesiologists are troubled and disappointed by the operation of these anesthesiology machines. Therefore, it is necessary to effect an alternate plan and they use the old fashioned method -- by hand. As skilled professionals, they don't skip a beat and the effort continues without incident. All instruments have been sterilized. Surgery begins promptly at 7:30 am

The "EYES" tell the story on this first day of high drama! Confidence in the

eyes of the surgeons. Fear in the eyes of the patients, Anxiety in the eyes of the families who wait. The eyes of patience, alert with kindness and caring in Nurses Judy Denk and Melanie Buoncristiani (both from San Rafael, CA) as they monitor each patient; also, they have tidied -up the Recover Room and decorated tables and walls with an inordinate variety of stuffed animals for distribution to patients. Patients arrive and are quickly attended to by the pediatricians whose eyes are filled with strict attention and competence as they sit beside each patient in ongoing evaluation.

After the anesthesia begins to wear off, parents are brought in to see the child for the first time since surgery and their eyes are filled with tears of gratitude; one mother is so overcome by the success of the surgery she suddenly slips to the floor in a faint, uninjured. Nurses scurry to assist her, while shielding the eyes of her son in protection.

The loving eyes of Sylvia Isilen as she playfully chides the children into selecting their favorite stuffed animal. The glowing eyes of interpreter Carmen Mannina (Colombia) as she methodically articulates and translates the concerns and questions of the parents. After recovery, the patients are wheeled to 2 or 3 bed wards by local hospital staff whose eyes are filled with pride.

Patients now have docile eyes as they arrive in their ward for the anticipated one night stay. And, so, the process continues until 10 surgeries have been accomplished on this first day. Doctors with smiling eyes of accomplishment of achieved goal, return to visit patients in the wards before leaving the hospital. And, pediatricians are the last to leave the hospital at 8:30 pm, with eyes brimming with joy.

The day has ended with the MAGIC of ROTAPLAST !!!