

2015 NEWSLETTER: In the nick of time Dec 31st 2015

Our 2015 – what a journey!

We hope that your Christmas has been bright and Holy and that we all look forward to a happy and safe 2016! Its New Years Eve, and here in the Philippines the usual firecracker bonanza has been going on since 8am this morning!

2015 – well it's been quite a year! Our Triple B Care projects clinic has been the busiest ever, with 80 burns and 51 'other wounds' (Jan 1 – Dec 14th). Evelyn and I have been kept out of mischief with dressing changes, physio and O.T. We have to be 'all-rounders'! We were delighted that a funding application in January (Helping Children Smile Inc) was successful and we now have 2 hospital beds, a mobile operating lamp and a new autoclave. Our 50 year old one still works, but our demands are much higher with all the cases we have. Many thank HCS!! (Qld)

Also in January, we warmly welcomed back our German RN, Toni Wulkhow and this time he brought his long term partner Diana, also a very experienced RN, both are tracheostomy care specialists. What a fantastic help they were at a very busy time! During their stay we had to make several visits to the provincial hospital to attend patients. Its about a one and a half hour drive and the former trusty steed, my old stainless steel jeep, had been struggling to keep up with the added longer journeys. The jeep had also suffered a burn injury! In an ironic twist, had caught fire when being welded to make more leg room in the passenger seat for Toni and Dianas long legs – both over 6' tall. All the interior upholstery, seats and seats belts were burned. The welder only sustained a small injury thankfully (from the melted upholstery and he was soon fixed). The jeep took a bit longer and the smell of burning foam lingered. You can imagine my surprise when Tony announced that his aunt and uncles' foundation in Germany wanted to buy us a new vehicle that would be more economical gas wise and a much smoother, safer ride. Its hard to believe but I actually resisted at first – my reason being that Tony wanted me to have an automatic transmission – I had never driven an automatic in my whole life! And, the money could have gone toward building a much needed new clinic. How very glad I am, that Tony and Diana convinced me! Our Toyota Revo is a joy to drive, it has aircon, even music and it's a third of the gasoline cost for the trip to the Provincial Hospital! It has 10 seats including driver so great for transporting patients to and fro. Its 10 years younger than the jeep at 15 years old. But it moves just like a lively teenager should hahaha! We have travelled so far, more than 8000 kilometers in comfort, for our patient's needs! Thank you so much Bettina and Dieter, Tony and Diana and to Henry Treutner Lotus Hilfsprogramme e.V Germany who introduced us all!

In February we welcomed Josh and Anushka from Melbourne as volunteers. They had travelled Asia prior to reaching us and described our humble accom as 'quite luxurious'! That made us very happy! Its true we don't have aircon, flushing toilets or hot water and sometimes no power, but we try and make it as homely as possible! Well done Josh and 'Nush' for your amazing help just when it was needed!

Our next volunteers (March) were from W.A, Lynne (retired) and Colleen, both experienced RNS. They opted for the comfort of aircon in our only local accom, the Red Lion Inn and who could blame them – it was very hot and humid! It was a testing time for both to understand the dynamics of a developing country health system (an oxymoron if ever there was one!) but they pushed on admirably and I hope and pray, left having had another life experience from which they each will benefit in many ways. We were grateful for their vast experience, thank you so much for joining us!

Also in March, a extra special occasion – the graduation of Modjeska Estrada, from Aura College, Major in accounting. Jeff Hudson, a Director of the Children First Foundation also attended. It was awesome to see Matete, as she is fondly known, step up for her degree. Why was it so special? Because in 2011, Matete was snatched from the jaws of death, literally. She had a very rare tumor, an ameloblastoma, which had been untreated for 4 years. The Children First Foundation and ANZ Interplast undertook to save her life –in Australia. With barely 3 weeks left to live, Matete underwent a massive 12 hour+ surgery with an 18 strong medical team, to remove the now 1.3kg tumour and reconstruct her completely wrecked jaw with bone from her leg. A major feat in any language! Thank you ANZ Interplast and Children First Foundation for the lifesaving surgery and care given to enable this young lady's life to be whole and productive. A second chance of the 'highest degree'!

We went 'home' to Australia in May and were very busy with speaking engagements and visiting family and friends. It had been 5 long years since we were home so a lot to catch up on. Monalisa ate her first sausage roll and it was love at first bite! One great disappointment was that the time I had planned to go through my worldly possessions, stored at a friend's place, didn't really materialise, since floods and a collapsing cottage meant that almost everything from my life both in Australia and UK was lost, including birth certificates, school/Uni records, family heirlooms. It was a blow, but material things mean nothing (till you lose them!) A few things survived, surprisingly some photographs, but not the collection of postcards and drawings by my grandfather for my grandma during the 1st world war or the watercolour artworks collection from around the world. Cookware, crockery even birth certificates can be replaced. The other things will just have to remain as memories. Guess I will have to make a new will now.....no'wt left to pass on hahaha!! Sorry folks!! Grateful thanks to Julie, Gary and Elaine for all those years of storage – they were not totally in vain – I am looking right now at the miniature brass anvil from Gretna Green and feel very warm.

Sadly we didn't see every one – one can only fit so much into a month – but we did a great deal. We caught up with family, we met new friends, caught up with old ones and it was just great to be around for my little brothers 50th birthday! Our guest speaking engagements were many and covered 3 states and even on the radio!! (see our website! <http://www.triplebcareprojects.org>). We almost needed another holiday to recover from our Aussie trip hahahaha!! Thank you for the fantastic sharing and caring! We also found a new volunteer, Fiona, who designed and now manages our website from Sydney!! Awesome work! Jeff, her dad, along with Paul my long time buddy from Sydney, are my Ozzy, in particular NSW 'managers' hahahaha!

Judy from Buderim joined us on our flight back and volunteered for over 2 weeks. Judy and I have known each other for more than 20 years and neither of us can remember if we met at work or at church but either way, I am SO glad we met! Judy had many experiences whilst here, in particular of local Govt hospital care; more to the point, lack of it. It was very good to have someone like Judy around to share the grief of the loss of a 9 month old boy, who had been injured in a house fire, though the burn itself did not claim his life. His story is on our website (www.triplecareprojects.org). Judy and I also discussed at length the plans for a new clinic/burns treatment and rehab facility and her daughter Megan and her husband Shane drew up some perfect plans. Shane and Megan are no strangers to renovations/building and their home has featured in Better Homes and Gardens! Thank you so much for the family input! Judy is planning to volunteer again in 2017! She will be 73 and I will be 60!! Judy is a stalwart at Fundraising events for the work of the clinic and we give thanks for the many gifts we have received due to her efforts.

The rainy season started off as usual and June July and August were wet with plenty of typhoons. We even had earthquakes (which I slept through!!) but thankfully apart from a few broken

windows in the upstairs office we were safe, sound and dry. July saw us blessed with donations to Triple B Care projects, in particular from Mr and Mrs Makings, who blessed us with an amount to ensure that Mona and I, volunteers and guests will have a good standard of living accommodation in the new clinic, including flushing toilets and hot water showers! God bless you more OJB!!

Dr Myles Lear, who had heard the Alan Jones Interview, came over to do a 'reccy' and then joined up with the Lotus Hilfsprogramme team on a medical mission in November. We had a great time talking about our life and times in Yorkshire and Lancashire respectively as teenagers. We did laugh a lot!! Myles was also a judge at the annual nutrition competition at Monalisa' school. He braved hot temperatures a lot of food! Well done Myles!

September saw us in Singapore!! How amazing was that????!! We were able to join my brother Colin, who had a work engagement and catch up with long time friend Chandra and meet his family at last, also Ken and Joy Lee whom I had met in KL in 2013. We visited Universal Studios and Sentosa Island thanks to blessings from Ken and Joy. We also had 3 speaking engagements in Government hospitals, one being the Singapore General Hospital and its Burns Intensive Care Unit, Here the head nurse and I were linked by the fact we had both done our burns training in the same place, the world famous McIndoe Unit at QVH East Grinstead, UK! Between us we had 50 years experience! Singapore celebrated its 50th birthday and my brother was 50 this year! A lot of 50;s hahahaha!!

We warmly welcomed: Kitty, a British trained physio who taught us some great moves, Dr Rachael from Yorkshire who has brought medical students and Junior Drs to know our work in the clinic; Ellen ,now our volunteer pharmacist, Helene and Anan, Georgie, Truc and Derek. We look forward to collaborating with each on future projects.

In November, our annual mission to Benguet General Hospital, Baguio, to meet up with our ANZ Interplast Friends was a huge success. We had 10 cases, 9 of whom were major contractures requiring equally major surgery. The most notable would have to be Janet, 48yrs old whose knee contracture had occurred following a burn when she was just 5 months old! She had never been able to 'stand tall' as the knee and heel of her left leg was contracted close to her buttock. She 'crawled' on her left knee and bent very low with her right leg so she could move. Thanks to the Interplast team and their truly amazing surgery, Janet can now stand tall as her dream as always been! Next year, Janet and her husband Alfonso, who never left her side whilst in hospital, will have been married 25 years. Janet's determination and diligence to do her physio will surely see her walk down the aisle to renew their vows! That is one thing I am sure of!

Our wonderful friend and pediatrician, Dra Paz Camdas, whom I first met in 2008, officially retired on Nov 8th. Paz has been the Interplast co-ordinator for many years and will be sorely missed. BUT..... there is hope that she might 'un-retire' for the future missions!!! This years mission was further blessed by being introduced to Chef Billy, of The Manor Hotel, Camp John Hay. He and his family and friends have done a lot to help the less fortunate and after a vibrant discussion, he announced that 2016 might 'just be YOUR year" [TripleB]. We await with cautious optimism!

Throughout the year a lot of friends and family have been working behind the scenes to sustain us with funds, medical supplies and prayer. Their hard work and huge efforts cannot go unnoticed as it is what truly keeps us going. They work under pressure, some even through traumatic times in their own lives. At the risk of omitting a name, forgive me in advance: Members of the Anglican Church of Australia: St Albans Wilston (Kat and Rosemary), St Marks Buderim (Judy, Father Jeremy); Kadasig Aid and Development: Glenys Gayfer and Family, Doc

Amy Sinclair-Faudan and family, Roz Alexander (New baby Micah!), Erin Pearson and Family; St Francis the Saviour parish; Father Terry and Father Jerry; St Vincents Hospital Melbourne; John Flynn Hospital, Gold Coast; Helena Murray with Mamas and Friends, Manila and also the Queenscliffe gang; Dra Lily Sim and family in Toledo, Ohio, Hearts on our Sleeves Foundation, Jeff Hudson/Paul Newman, Sydney, Truc and Helene (Embassy Bakesale), Elaine and Roger Relucio, Maureen Sullivan along with the Cradeley WI, UK, Pam & Martin Scott UK, Helping Hands Ministry & CRU SBMA; Ken Collins RC Freshwater Bay W.A; Swinfen Charitable Trust (Telemedicine) UK ; Lotus Foundation, San Marcelino, Lotus Hilfsprogamme e.V Germany AND all my friends and family around the globe, too numerous to mention!

A huge thank you to Evelyn, my 2i/c who coped admirably when we were away for so long and whose knowledge of 'things local' is exemplary!

Monalisa went in to double figures this year and turned 10yrs old! AND she finally learned how to ride a bike!! Yay!! Looking forward to lots of Sunday cycles together! Very proud of her efforts! She is so tall that we already need another bicycle – she bangs her knees on the handlebars of the current one!

We seem to have become a cat rescue centre- we now have 5! The 2 dogs Bonny and Waggly are dealing well with the extra felines. Each of the cats have a different story, but better leave that for the book I still plan to write about our life here!! They are all well, and very very sweet. And great stress relievers to boot!

I am grateful for the spiritual support of Bishop Arthur V Jones from the Holy Trinity Church in Forbes Park. Bishop Jones has only one year left of his 'posting' here in Philippines so I pray that so that I might overcome my fear of driving in Manila and make more trips to visit him as its expensive to hire a driver.

A famous Yorkshire saying springs to mind: "We don't have much money, but we do see life!"

Lets hope that 2016 will be EVERYONES' best year yet!

Please pray that the funds/building materials we need to build our new burns treatment and rehab centre will come to fruition so we can continue our healing ministry for the poor and less fortunate in Zambales who suffer burns or who are born with cleft lip and palate. We need between 5 and 7 million pesos. Or materials and labour!! Or a mix of both!

We thank you for all your support for the clinic and for Mona and I. We can't do what we do without you.

Like I said before "What a year!"

Health, happiness, prosperity and much love to all.

Val and Monalisa and our furry friends [dogs] Bonny, Waggly, and [Cats]: Tom, Jerry, Alvin, Po and Elanor.