

Refuge International

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2017

Delivering Clean Water • Improving Health Care • Reducing Illiteracy

Victoriano's Story

Deborah Bell

This is a story about Victoriano, a young father of four in Guatemala. You may not want to look at all of these pictures, as some are pretty gruesome—but we want to tell this story.



Victoriano's leg upon his arrival

In August of 2016, Victoriano was in an accident and broke his leg. He had to sell his property to pay for the metal plate that he needed to fix his leg. Over the next eight months, the skin over the plate pulled apart, and he developed an infection that exposed the plate.

In May of this year, Refuge International held consecutive specialty clinics in San Raymundo, Guatemala. The first week focused on patients with orthopedic issues, and the second week was a women's health week. Victoriano came to the clinic on the day the orthopedic team had left! We were preparing for the women's health clinic, and certainly, Victoriano was *not* a woman.

All of the great religions teach their followers to reach out with compassion to those in need. In the story of the Good Samaritan, both a priest and a Levite pass by a traveler who has been stripped of clothing, beaten, and left half dead alongside the road. They show no compassion for the wounded man and continue on their way, going about God's work.

My first response was not unlike that of the priest and the Levite. I wanted to tell Victoriano that we could not help him. We were on our way to beginning our Women's Health Week; we were done with **bone** week! But after getting his phone number, we sent Victoriano home and told him he would be contacted.

I reluctantly sent pictures to Dr. J.B. Parker, the orthopedist who had just finished up the orthopedic week. He was boarding a plane to leave Guatemala, and he replied, "That plate needs to come out."

Dr. Ken Eveland, general surgeon extraordinaire, said, "I can take that plate out."

Joe Leier, a biomedical engineer who is with Refuge International on most of our trips, had the correct tool on hand. We sterilized the tool and removed the plate. There was obvious osteomyelitis, an infection in the bone which is very difficult to cure. That is another part of the story. Refuge International had the perfect intravenous medication to treat the infection, thanks to a generous donation from a patient back in the United States who no longer needed it. When we packed the medication, there was no indication that it would ever be needed in Guatemala—but *it was!*

Victoriano was the *first* surgical case for Women's Health Week—a **man** with an orthopedic issue. My God has a sense of humor, and I guess he showed us: help *all* in need *all* the time!

After Victoriano spent a week in the clinic receiving antibiotics, loving care from the women's health nurses, and daily dressing changes, his leg improved—but we found that part of the bone was dead and needed to be removed. Dr. Edgar Rosales, a Guatemalan orthopedist, performed the much-needed surgery after the women's health team had departed.



Victoriano and sons with his healed leg

Victoriano required care for an additional six weeks. Ultimately, his leg **healed!** He is walking and is back at work, thanks to Dr. Eveland, Joe Leier, Dr. Edgar Rosales, Edy Cojon, and *all* of the women's health team, whose first patient was a man with an orthopedic injury.

The total cost of Victoriano's care was \$3,000. Your donation will

help us continue serving those who come to Refuge International for help.



Midway through healing

Meet the Bebensees

DeAnn Vickles

Dr. Lonette and Edward Bebensee were on Refuge International's first medical mission trip to San Raymundo in 2003, and they have been going twice a year since that time.

Dr. Lonette Bebensee has served as a general surgeon and manager of the operating area. Ed has built exam lights, steps to help patients get on exam tables, screen doors, and much-needed shelving to keep supplies organized. If something needs repair, Ed is the *man*.

Back in the late '60s, Lonette and Ed met after graduating from college. Lonette states that she did not want an athlete of any kind. "No jocks in my house, and he was a jock." They dated for five days, and one month later they were married. She says that "you can still hear the wedding bells."

After raising their three children and working in the operating room, Dr. Bebensee (Dr. B.) decided she wanted to go to medical school—so at the age of 43, that is what she did. In 2000, Dr. B. and Ed made their first trip to San Raymundo with a group from Texarkana, Texas. That is where they met Deborah Bell, founder of Refuge International, and Dr. B. and Ed were the first to sign up for Refuge International's initial mission trip.

When asked why they continue to volunteer twice a year for these trips, Dr. B. said simply, "The mission has always been extremely important to us both." In recent years, she has taken on the role of teaching nursing students and premedical students about operating room procedures.



Dr. Lonette & Ed Bebensee

In addition to traveling to Guatemala twice a year to serve, Dr. B. travels from the Dallas area every Tuesday to work in the Refuge International warehouse, sorting donated supplies and preparing for medical mission trips.

It is only through the Refuge International volunteers, who use their time off and funds to travel, that we can provide necessary medical care to the patients of Guatemala. Dedicated volunteers, like Dr. B. and Ed, are an integral part of the work Refuge International is doing. Thank you, Dr. B. and Ed, for all that you do! And thanks to all of our volunteers who give so much!

To give real service, you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity.

About Refuge International

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2017 At a Glance

Patients cared for during medical missions:

3,359

Surgeries performed:

435

Volunteers working with Refuge International:

333

Patients seen in the Hiway 80 clinic:

339

Patients cared for in the Sarstun clinic throughout the year:

1,563