

Arthur E. Guedel Memorial Anesthesia Center



The Guedel Center

The center offers an outstanding collection of rare and contemporary anesthesia literature, audiotape and videotape resources, as well as the ability to research specialized topics.

Anesthesia Abroad

By Helen T. O'Keeffe, M.D., Director, District 7

Many years ago, in 1971 to be exact, as an anesthesia resident at Stanford, I was privileged to be invited to participate in one of Dr. Donald Laub's new Interplast expeditions to Honduras. Interplast started in 1969, is still in operation and is the original granddaddy of the overseas plastic surgery missions. Knowing how much this experience had given me, both in confidence and accomplishment at the time, as well as a long-lasting sense of appreciation for all our blessings, I had always intended to repeat this experience once our children were grown. Then last year, a Rotarian friend of my husband's introduced me to Rotaplast which is funded by Rotary Clubs worldwide and does similar plastic surgery missions overseas.

Both Rotaplast and Interplast report that their most difficult recruiting task is for anesthesiologists with suitable pediatric experience. So, once I had been identified as qualified and interested, there was no escape (not that I wanted one), and I ended up on an airplane to Cebu City, the Philippines, with a group of people I had never met before, but who became very special to me just over the next two weeks. It was exhilarating, exhausting, fascinating, and unforgettable.

The Rotarians have been doing this since 1993, are very well organized and, in some countries such as the Philippines, are well supported by the local Rotary Club. The team consisted of plastic surgeons, OR and PACU nurses, pediatricians, Rotary support staff and four anesthesiologists (for three ORs). The charts were well organized

and the patients prescreened. Rotary brings its own equipment, including good laryngoscopes, up-to-date monitors and plenty of RAE tubes, IV catheters and so forth. We used the local anesthesia machines. Mine was a Japanese-built basic model. It did have a fail-safe nitrous/O₂ interlink, excellent pop-off valve and a sevoflurane vaporizer. The only problem was that our filling device did not match the Japanese link so I had to do what the locals do—fill the vaporizer with a 10 cc syringe as needed.



Outstanding memories from this experience are numerous:

- The smiles of the parents.
- The eager local teenage volunteers providing us with family data.
- Elegant stewardesses on Philippine Airlines embracing us on arrival, saying “Doctor, you just don’t know the need.”
- An adult cleft lip patient sneaking looks at himself in the mirror in the PACU.
- Getting to know the other volunteers.
- A lot of laughter in spite of the fatigue.

In addition, there are stories such as the farmer father from a remote island who heard about Rotaplast on a short-wave radio and saved every penny for the evaluation trip for his infant daughter. He was disappointed that the surgical part would be so soon that he would not have time to save more. Then the whole village pitched in for their fares and found lodging for them in Cebu City.



A happy patient and parent

There was also the mother of a gorgeous 14-year-old girl with a cleft lip, again from a remote island, who explained that now her daughter would willingly go to school instead of just staying in the house. The result was a happy child and a mom looking to the future.

One great memory was of the teaching moments with two young female anesthesia residents from Cebu. When we were finished, we left them the opened re-used RAE tubes and oral airways. One of the residents said, “These will be great for tonsils! I really can have these?” as she slipped the oral airway in her pocket.

On our one sightseeing day near Magellan’s monument, where he first landed, we saw an infant with a cleft lip from a poor family who knew nothing of the program. The family signed her up, and her cleft lip was fixed later in the week!

Guedel (cont'd)

The final postop clinic day was wonderful when all the patients and parents from each OR had a group picture taken with the staff from that room. The Rotarians there do love their photo ops!

If anyone is interested in this terrific experience, you can find details about the many 2005 trips on the Internet at <http://www.rotaplast.org>. I couldn't recommend it more: to do something worthwhile that gives you back many times more in energy and laughter.



In the Operating Room

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