



Angie Elkins M.T.

Lost in the Jungle

By Jessica Gondela

I made the trip to Peru as a first year medical student with a glimmer in my eye and a stethoscope around my neck. I'll never forget stepping off the boat into a landscape that was only recognizable because it had palm trees similar to those in Florida, my home state. Few physicians land themselves an opportunity in the middle of the Amazon jungle; and even fewer make the trip not knowing a soul, boarding a boat with a bunch of strangers. But these same strangers also gain the same sense of gratification as I do helping the most underserved patients they can find in the world.

I stepped off the boat with the amazement and excitement that a child has when he or she arrives in Disneyland. Surprise caught me when a small three-year-old child grasped my hand and smiled shyly, asking me in her native Spanish dialect, "Who are you and why are you here visiting my village?" I smiled back at her warmly and said, "I am Jessica, and we are here to help you and your village with their health." Later that day I had the privilege of examining her with one of the physicians, and we gave her medications to clear her of an uncomfortable intestinal parasite that she likely had suffered from most of her life.

Working with patients not only in the international arena, but also in the middle of the jungle, is not an easy task. We set up a make-shift table with donated medications and had only the stethoscopes around our necks and the basic medical tools that we brought from the United States, along

with one portable ultrasound machine. It was truly the most "MacGyver" styles of medicine I have seen yet. We had to be the most resourceful physicians we could be, given the poverty of tools available. A startling example of this was a young mother who brought in her infant who was in respiratory distress. The baby exhibited all of the classic signs and symptoms we were taught in medical school—nasal flaring, costal retractions and the horrifying gasping and choking noises (which I will never ever forget)—except we were in the middle of the Amazon and nothing was available to save the child in the village. We quickly rushed her onto the boat and used a nebulizer treatment one of the physicians had thankfully brought to stabilize the infant. It was a powerful moment for all of us, medical and non-medical professionals alike.

The acute medicine we performed in the middle of the Amazon reminded me of the deep excitement that I cherish and hold on to as I progress through the grueling yet incredible years of medical training. As young, budding physicians-in-training, we keep these memories in our pocket for the challenging days in our careers as a reminder of the reasons that we chose this path. I know this is the only field I could ever envision myself in, and if you ever catch me daydreaming during a long day in the hospital, it is simply my eyes drifting overseas with longing for another international medical jungle adventure.

Chances and Changes

By Katie Relihan

Hey Daddo,
I just talked to you yesterday
...you said I love you Katez
...you said you were going to get two stents placed today
...you said there were not going to be any complications
...you said you would be done by 10 AM and would not have to stay
...you said you would quit smoking and change your ways

Now
...I am looking at you
...I am asking myself why
...I am wondering if you will be there in the future, will you be there next week or even tomorrow
...I detest you for telling Mom, Michael and I to let you die

You are undergoing quadruple bypass surgery at 59, oxygen saturation of 93%, and ejection fraction of 37%
...what am I to think if not the worst?
...you made it out of surgery and are in a medical coma
...you don't look the way I remember you one bit
...you should have quit smoking earlier, you should have changed, it is all your fault

Why?
...am I crying
...am I this upset
...am I this angry
...can I not keep myself together
...am I so glad you are still alive and I can see your smile
...do medical miracles happen
...did I forget to say I love you and thanks for being my Daddo before you went in for surgery?

Did I tell you how much I love you? Did I thank you for being in my life?

In the Window

By Carol Warren

Who is the girl in the window
Looking at the rain
Or the reflection of tears
Running down the glass?
Reflecting the wishes of others
Is walking a tightrope
Between who I am
And who I seem.
You want me to be me
But you only see the me
You want me to be.
Ring around the rosy
The circle twists,
The chain of ME's
All fall down.
Which one is the one you love?
Who is the girl in the window
Looking at the rain
Or the reflection of tears
Running down the glass?

