

THE CORNERSTONE FOUNDATION

“...the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” Mt. 21:42

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October 2014

“...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith....” Hebrews 12:1-2

There is a colorful expression in Spanish, “*pasar el caballete*.” It doesn’t really translate into English very directly. In a concrete sense it means to walk the ridgeline of a roof, the kind of roof “*de dos aguas*,” a roof that slopes in 2 different directions. In the more practical English, we just call it “a peaked roof.” But the Spanish lends itself to the word picture I’m trying to sketch, a narrow crest of a roof, which divides where water falls in one direction on your right hand, and another direction on your left hand. Figuratively “*pasar el caballete*” means to carefully choose your way between falling to one kind of peril on the one side, and to the opposite kind of peril on the other. So, imagine you are “*pasando el caballete*,” walking the crest of a steeply-pitched, tiled roof. The wind shoves you sideways in gusts. The ridgecap is inches wide, rounded and slick. Some of the tiles are loose. There would be nothing to stop the slide if you fall to either side, and it’s a long drop to the cobblestones below. How do you keep your balance?

Maely hops in on one leg. Without a pause, she matter-of-factly hops across the room to a chair, climbs up, turns around and gravely faces whatever is coming next. She shows no temerity and offers no explanation for the hopping, but sits there solemnly, all big eyes beneath a halo of curls. “*What?*” those eyes seem to ask. “*Don’t all four year old girls enter a room hopping on one leg?*” Maely’s parents follow close behind and sit next to her, also without saying more than the polite exchange of greetings. There is no need for much of an explanation actually. Most of the story is told by the massive tumor below Maely’s left knee, by the odd angle in which her leg below the tumor lies, and by the X-Rays I hang upon the view box and study. A few questions and a quick physical exam fill in the details.



Maely

Maely has an unhealed fracture of her leg just below the knee. The fracture is in the midst of a grapefruit-sized tumor. She has enlarged lymph nodes where her thin-boned thigh meets the rest of her petite body. Her parents answer that this began about 4 months ago, and they outline a typical story of the poor seeking health care in a poor country. They live several hours away by bus and have tried every meager avenue available to them in the public health system between there and here. The outcome has amounted to suffering inadequate medical treatment, inadequate surgery, and time lost to no avail. I just really don’t want to see her leg flopping around anymore, and I don’t want her to listen to what I have to say to her parents, so I carry Maely out to the corridor and hand her off to an aunt? a grandmother? a family member of another patient? As waiting patients in this culture so readily adopt one another, I often never know whether they are close family or just-met fellow pilgrims. They share one another’s burdens well.

I turn back and sit facing Maely's mother & father. The history and the physical exam and the X-Rays are very suggestive of a bone or muscle cancer, and the lymph node enlargement strongly suggests that this cancer has already metastasized regionally. At the very least, Maely is facing an above-the-knee amputation and removal of all of the lymphatic tissue in her groin, followed by chemotherapy. I tell her Mother and Father as much in general terms, but stress that we have to take this journey one step at a time. Since the treatment is so radical if the diagnosis is what I suspect it to be, we first must establish that diagnosis with certainty. That is the first step. This means a generous tissue biopsy and removal of representative lymph nodes.

In order to not delay her treatment further, we moved other surgery off of the already over-packed schedule and did the necessary tissue biopsies and limited lymph node dissection. I sent the tissue off to the pathologist, dreading what I had little doubt they would show and dreading even more what would be required once the pathology results came back. In order to try to save her life we would have to amputate her leg and remove the lymph nodes of her upper leg and groin, then get her through chemotherapy, and then she might someday get to go to kindergarten.

Of course we prayed for Maely and with her parents, before going back to the Operating Room, and again in the OR before surgery. That we do with every patient. Because her particular tragedy stands out from many of the others in the queue, we pray for her healing in our daily devotions. I'm sure many others also did so. Rosanne brought her need up in Fellowship, so the whole community prayed for her. So why was I so surprised when I received notice that Maely's Pathology Results came back with no evidence of cancer, only chronic inflammation? Why was I skeptical of the results, sifting through the details of the report to see if I should believe them? Why? Because the stakes are so high. If we treat this only as one would treat an infection of the bone, that is pretty radical in and of itself, but it would be wholly inadequate treatment if this is indeed what it still appears to be clinically, an aggressive cancer. If it is, and there is any further delay in definitive treatment for cancer, it will rapidly be beyond recall and she would inevitably die of it.

So there it is: "*el caballete*," the roof's ridge. On the one hand, we prayed earnestly that God would heal her of cancer. Her path came back benign, both from the tumor itself and the enlarged lymph nodes. So perhaps she was healed or perhaps this was an odd presentation of an infection all

along. Either way, in faith shouldn't I accept that with joy? Isn't that what we prayed for? Should I cynically doubt God's answer? On the other hand, I could fall in the opposite direction. The only evidence I have that this is a benign process is the Pathology readout. What if they are mistaken? If I act upon the rationale that "we prayed for healing and the path reports a benign process," I may be laying hold of false hope, and blindly follow that to the ultimate injury of this little girl and her family. Out of an abundance of caution shouldn't I still consider cancer to be the most dangerous as well as the most scientifically likely diagnosis? You begin to see how narrow the path along the crest of this roof, and how perilous the fall to one side or the other.

I tell you about Maely, in part because I hope you will remember her and pray for her. But I also tell this part of her story and my conundrum regarding how to proceed because I expect that you've also had to walk the line between what might be false faith on the one side and doubting God on the other. I thought we might compare notes. Since such situations are a particular occupational hazard of my job, in the past 30 years as a surgeon this is not the first time I've had to *pasar el caballete*. It takes little time to learn that you can't stand still, and not much more time to learn not to watch your own feet. You must move steadily forward. But how to keep your balance? For my part, it has never seemed right to ask "What would Jesus do?" After all, He is the Christ, the son of the Living God. I am not.

So, instead I ask, what would the Lord have me do? Then I focus on the middle distance at the end of the roof, and move steadily forward, one step at a time. You see, to tell the truth, I don't have the faith to waste. I don't have much faith in Faith alone and I don't have much faith in Science alone. I have faith in one Person, just enough faith to take the next step toward where He stands, at the end of the roof.

For Maely the next step seems clear. We'll operate as if this is a chronic infection, removing the unhealthy tissue down to and between the bones. We will, of course, treat her with antibiotics, and we'll stabilize the fracture with a cast or an external fixator. But we'll also definitely send all of the tissue we remove to Pathology, and be ready to change course if it comes back malignant. That seems to me to be walking the line between two waters. Still.... I might be wrong.

So, I tell you about Maely in part because I hope you will remember her and pray for her. For, you see, I haven't lost faith that your prayers matter. And, it matters what happens to Maely and how you

keep your balance while “*pasando el caballete*” and who you keep your eyes on while you walk the line.

God’s grace,

Jefferson McKenney, M.D.

Meet the Missionaries

As you pray for the work of the Lord at Loma de Luz, it helps to know some of the missionaries for whom you are praying. We include the *Meet the Missionaries* feature for that very purpose, but it’s been a year since we last did that. We introduce Julia and Estelle Barnett to you now. They’re pretty awesome and have been invaluable in so many ways.



Julia and Estelle Barnett

Julia began serving with Hospital Loma de Luz in 2008. Estelle joined her in 2009. Together they have served in multiple areas of the ministry, including the administration of the hospital and the administration and teaching at El Camino Bilingual School. Estelle, the Assistant Director of El Camino, currently teaches the Kindergarten and Preschool classes at El Camino, and Julia continues to serve as an aide in each class. Julia is also of vital importance in Hospital Administration each day after school. They find many ways to share Christ’s love with the surrounding community, most specifically by teaching and training the youngest school aged members of the local villages. Spending time outside school with any of their El Camino students or families is a highlight for them as well. They call Tulsa, OK their hometown.

Julia recently sent this note along with photos:

Our bilingual school, El Camino, was honored to march in the Honduran Independence Day Parade on September 15. Forty of our Kindergarten and First and Second Grade students participated. The sashes that the students wore represented core values that we teach at the school based on the Fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23.



Independence Day Parade

By the way, it will probably give you a smile to know that Laysha--the little girl you read about in the last newsletter --was in the parade too ... dressed as a Princess.

--SM

News and Needs

El Camino Elementary School will complete its third school year November 14th. The 2015 school year will begin again February 2, 2015(Groundhog’s Day in the USA).

By faith we will be teaching Pre-Kinder, Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, and Third Grade in 2015. We need full time teachers to commit for 2015. Pray that God sends them and that they will come.

Home for Cornerstone – In the last newsletter we conveyed to you that now, for the first time in its 22 year history and nine years after Hurricane Katrina devastated our rented office in Biloxi, it is time for the Cornerstone Foundation to have a place of its own to serve as a home base.

In late June, we had found a small parcel in a perfect location that would suffice. While Dr. Jeff was in the U.S. in late June, he was walking that parcel, pondering how to be able to build the needed buildings on that small parcel. As he walked, he

noticed a long, lovely, concrete driveway leading to larger property that was just behind the parcel and its next door neighbor's landscaping business.



Driveway of Property

Following the driveway, he found that it was the driveway of property that then opened onto 8.5 acres of land with a small office building already upon it. Trying to follow the trail of God's guidance, he inquired and learned that it was for sale as a foreclosure. The Cornerstone Board of Directors was already scheduled to meet within days of that event and, during the meeting, unanimously agreed to buy it. The paperwork was set in motion, and the McKenneys returned to Honduras and then in late August flew back to the Mississippi coast for closing on the property. It was almost on the exact same date that they had flown home after Hurricane Katrina nine years earlier and had found utter destruction awaiting them.

Through a combination of your generous donations and a couple of generous loans from within Cornerstone leadership, we were able to purchase the land and small office building at 9032 Woolmarket Road, Biloxi, MS.



Cornerstone's Home Base

Note part of office building in far left corner

This 8.5 acres is very centrally located, yet quiet and peaceful with the feel of being "in the country." We have also located the well on the property (which had been bull-dozed over by previous owners) and found the well to be in good condition. We are working on getting the well up and running, then plan to finish out the unfinished office building and move into it over the next couple of months.

Kathleen Jones is graciously training our new Administrative Secretary, Kay Cox, and it looks like that transition also will be steadily taking place over the next couple of months. So, please remember the transitions taking place at Cornerstone over the next couple of months, the loans to be repaid, and the need for continued grace before city and county officials regarding licenses and authorizations. We extend our gratitude to each of you for your prayers and your generosity, and we offer thanks to God for His goodness toward us.

Address--We won't be able to receive mail at our new location until December, so, until then, please continue using our Saucier address for postal mail: 18384 West Lake Dr., Saucier, MS 39574. Also, if you want a donation to go toward the property / new office, then please include a note of some kind with the donation to let us know.

Beyond Natural A dear friend of mine (a dear friend of many people), Bob Warren, passed away unexpectedly recently. A former professional basketball player, Bob became a dedicated Christian and fell in love with the God who is completely good and yet loves us not based on our performance. He began a small Bible study which grew over the years into a huge yet humble ministry (a rare combination). Bob's life touched thousands, and his passion for the Lord never waned. Bob used to say that he wanted his tombstone to say "Here lies a man whose life can only be explained by God." He meant, I think, that if God didn't exist and were not the sort of God He is, then Bob's life and ministry would have been sheer lunacy to observe and an impossibility to live. It was a life that made no sense to the world but made great sense in in God's economy and bore fruit above and beyond what could've happened in any scenario that didn't include Jesus Christ.

I've heard Dr. Jeff often say much the same thing—calling Loma de Luz a "most improbable work." On any given day, he says, what is accomplished is beyond what the sum total of our resources and best efforts could've accomplished.

It, like the fruit of Bob's life and ministry, can only be accounted for by God's presence and His hand at work.

I thank you for your help in this most improbable work at Loma de Luz. I hope you will keep on running in your race-journey and in your part of improbable works blessed by God. May you keep looking ahead to the Author and Finisher of our Faith—to Jesus, who placed no value on what the world tends to value, the Jesus who, remarkably, values us, the Jesus who “gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist” (Romans 4:17).

We appreciate and pray for you.

--Sally Mahoney for Cornerstone