

Ship Report

11 November 2005 | Monrovia, Liberia



Mercy Ship holds medical screening day in Monrovia

The sun, looking for a place to peek through the clouds, prepared to rise over Monrovia. Crew members from the Mercy Ship *Anastasis* piled into Land Rovers and pulled onto one of the city's main streets, still quiet before dawn. They drove through the unlit and potholed roads that, when day came, would be crowded with vehicles and vendors.

More than half of the Mercy Ship's 350-person crew spent the day in the Outpatient Clinic at Monrovia's JFK Hospital, the site of a medical screening that would determine who could be given assistance during the ship's stay in Liberia. Additionally, 50 locals joined the team, assisting doctors and patients by translating to and from the Liberian dialect.

The first of the Mercy Ships staff arrived by 6:00 a.m.—and they found people already forming lines, waiting for a chance to see a doctor. *"They were here before we were,"* marveled Mark Seamone, a deckhand who served as part of the security team on screening day. Over the course of the 14-hour day, crew took part in every facet of screening: from photography to prayer to playing with kids, from drawing blood to driving Land Rovers. Doctors examined hundreds of

patients who had come from all over Liberia and neighboring nations seeking medical care.

Mark Holmes stood in the line outside JFK Hospital. He brought his 12-year-old "junior brother" Vannah to the screening from the Paynesville district, located on the outskirts of Monrovia. Vannah, his sight almost completely gone, listened intently to his brother's conversation. Then he was brought into the dialogue. *"Do you like sports?"* he was asked. His clouded eyes lit up, along with his whole face. *"Yeah,"* he replied, smiling.

Emmanuel George, 21 years old, sat quietly as Dr. Gary Parker studied his disfigured face, only speaking when the translator asked him questions. *"How long have you had this problem? Were you born with it?"* the translator inquired. Emmanuel replied that, no, the problem started when he was five years old. Within moments, Dr. Parker diagnosed him with noma—"the melting disease"—a bacterial condition that destroys soft tissue and bone.

By the day's end, more than 400 patients were scheduled for procedures: nearly 300 maxillofacial, plastics, and general surgeries; and 170 eye surgeries—including Emmanuel. Sadly, Vannah's eye condition proved irreparable. For those like Vannah that Mercy Ships cannot help surgically, there were crewmembers available throughout the screening day to pray and provide comfort.

Throughout the seven months of field service in Liberia, the Mercy Ship, the site for all of the surgeries, will be full of activity; in addition, a dental clinic will run at a nearby hospital, completing as many as 10,000 procedures. *"We are excited to see what God will do during our time here in Liberia,"* stated Marty Wingrave, Screening Coordinator.

Liberians, too, are excited. Thomas Freeman, an elderly man struggling with his eyesight for several years, heard about the arrival of the *Anastasis* on the radio several times a day. He spoke of his desire to see his family members again, to do things he has missed doing. *“That is what is in my heart,”* he said, *“so I’ve been praying for this ship to come.”*



© Copyright Mercy Ships International 2005
Ship Reports available online at www.mercyships.org

