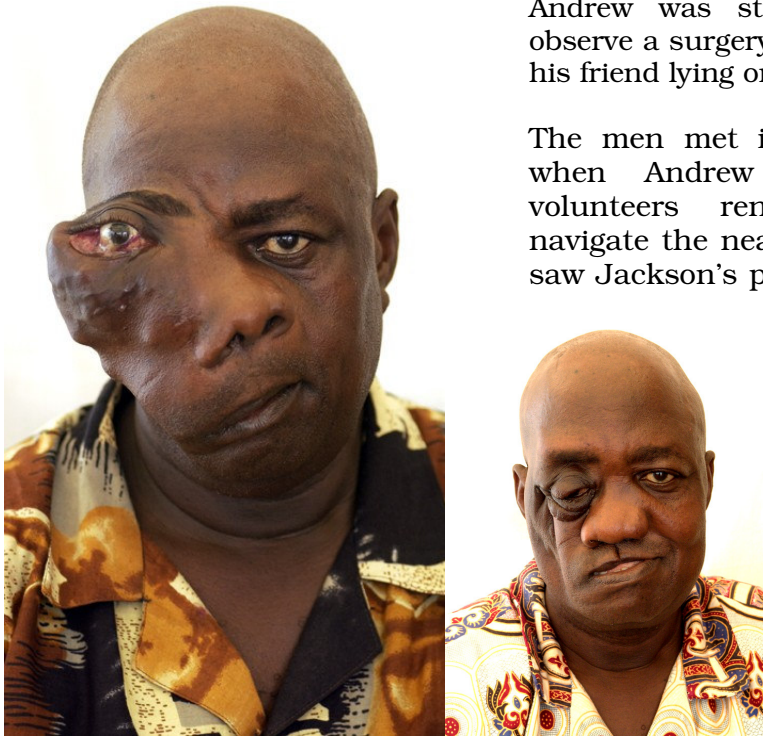


A Pleasant Surprise



14 March 2006



Andrew was stunned. He'd signed up to observe a surgery, but he didn't expect it to be his friend lying on the table.

The men met in Jackson's remote village when Andrew and some other ship volunteers rented dug-out canoes to navigate the nearby St. John River. Andrew saw Jackson's pronounced facial tumor and wondered if Mercy Ships would be able to help. His unspoken question was answered when Jackson learned they were from Mercy Ships and told them he would be coming to their ship a week later. The group, including Jackson, spent the day together canoeing and celebrating Jackson's upcoming surgery.

Jackson's surgery was scheduled to remove a tumor called an ameloblastoma, which had affected him since 1994. The tumor originates from the cells which form the enamel of the teeth during development. The tumor is benign, but recurrence is a serious problem if it occurs near vital structures deep in the head. Previously, Jackson underwent three surgeries while a war refugee in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, but the tumor returned, disfiguring the right side of his face. The Chief Medical Officer onboard the *Anastasis*, Dr. Gary Parker wanted to ensure this removal surgery was Jackson's last.

Physically, the tumor blocked Jackson from breathing through his nose, and blinded his right eye. Yet he was blessed with supportive friends and family. His boss agreed to rehire him after recovery; he left the job because he was embarrassed about the tumor. His sons assisted him with daily tasks made too difficult by the tumor's presence. And his pastor and church family prayed for him during years of dealing with the tumor and throughout this surgery.

After eight hours on the operating table, Jackson's tumor was gone; his right eye was returned to its original position, although it remained blind. He would require more surgery to repair his palette and check bone. But for now, Jackson looks forward to returning to work and doing things for himself. He looks forward to life getting back to normal.

For Andrew, Jackson's surgery was more than observing a technical procedure. *"It was cool to see Mercy Ships in action and to see a patient before surgery, during and after."* Both men left the operating theatre changed.