

Brought Together by the Same Cause

Dr. Randall Wiley and Dr. James Gilman provide free dental care to children in Guatemala

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By Nathan Raymond

“Hey, I know a Randall!” exclaims Dr. Jim Gilman as he stands next to Dr. Randall Wiley’s portable dental chair. Jim is reminiscing about the reconnection between himself and Randall more than 40 years after they served together at Fort Campbell in Kentucky. With no pre-planning or communication over several decades, two men who worked together as dentists in the US Army Dental Corps, happened to be on the same team to treat kids in Antigua, Guatemala in the spring of 2017.

Jim and Randall joined Global Dental Relief (GDR) that year to work in a Guatemala clinic. GDR volunteers have been working since 2001 to bring dental care to children around the world. Over the last 17 years 2,800 volunteers have treated 171,000 children in India, Nepal, Cambodia, Kenya and Guatemala. In 2018, 367 volunteers served 24,000 children with \$4.8 million in donated dental care.



Randall (L), Jim (C), Naya (R)

As the conversation moves forward, driven by Dr. Gilman, Randall stands quietly by, a huge grin on his face. Jim continues, revealing that they nearly missed each other as he only signed up to join the GDR clinic to fill a last-minute need two weeks before it began. Since then, they have volunteered together twice on GDR projects in Guatemala and Jim even brought his granddaughter, Naya, to join him. They are planning to reunite once more in 2019 or 2020 to continue their re-found friendship.

In forty years, a lot has happened – they moved to different parts of the country, started families and dental practices, and lived vastly different lives. Call it fate or random chance, but they both felt the same calling to give back to the global community using the skills that they honed together at Fort Campbell.

“He used to be a red-head,” Randall interjects. Jim accepts that things, including his hair, have changed a lot but they are both still healthy, alive, and “relatively sane.”

Jim continues, regaling everyone around him with the story of when he joined the clinic in Guatemala and watched as a stooped, but energetic man came up the stairs and introduced himself. “The hair on the back of my neck still stands up thinking about it, that 46 years after working side by side in a 2-chair children’s dental clinic, we would meet in Antigua,



Dr. Jim Gilman

Guatemala.” He turns to me and makes sure I understand, “Randall taught me everything I know about pediatric dentistry in a World War II vintage hospital!”

The thread that bonds these two Army trained dentists forty years later is their commitment to help children around the world live healthier lives.

Over the course of two clinics and 10 clinic days, Randall, Jim and fellow volunteers provided \$310,710.00 (U.S. equivalent) of donated dental care to 1,533 patients. They ran two of the seven dental chairs focusing on restorative care, extraction of painful and infected teeth, and oral health education.

In addition to restorations and fillings, GDR volunteer teams provide oral health education,

cleanings, and fluoride treatments. GDR’s mission is focused on raising the oral health of the whole community, one school at a time.

GDR hosts 27 clinics a year in India, Nepal, Cambodia, Kenya and Guatemala. While Jim and Randall never expected to reunite in this way, they are both looking forward to their next adventure in service with GDR. Randall reflects that “we started our careers together, treating children and decades later we are brought together by the same cause. It doesn’t get any better than that!”



Dr. Randall Wiley

ABOUT GLOBAL DENTAL RELIEF

Global Dental Relief (GDR) is a 501(c)3 charitable organization established in 2001 to provide free dental care and oral health education to impoverished children and families in Nepal, northern India, Cambodia, Kenya and Guatemala. GDR's commitment is to return to these same children every two years to provide continuous care. Each child received an initial examination, followed by a cleaning, and restorations and extractions as needed. At the end of their treatment, patients were given a fluoride treatment, a new toothbrush, and oral health education to improve awareness and future tooth brushing habits.

To learn more about Global Dental Relief, visit www.globaldentalrelief.org. You don't have to be a dentist to volunteer!

ABOUT DR. JIM GILMAN

Dr. Gilman has volunteered in 8 GDR clinics in 3 countries to date with and is returning to Guatemala in May with his granddaughter. Dr. Gilman also uses his vast experience as part of a dental project in Malawi.

Education:

Macalester College, Class of '66

University of Minnesota- School of Dentistry

Work:

US Army Dental Corps

[Nelson & Page Dental P.C.](#)

ABOUT DR. RANDALL WILEY

Dr. Wiley has volunteered in 21 GDR clinics in 5 countries to date and is already signed up to do more in 2019.

Education:

San Jose State University, Class of '65

Creighton University- School of Dentistry

Work:

US Army Dental Corps, 1969-1971

Private practice from 1973-2015.