



Oasis Trip Report, September 24, 2011

By Don Wolf

The long shadows of the stately palm trees were providing some protection from the sun and the 80-degree heat at 8:00 AM at Coachella Valley High School. A long line was forming at the triage station at the entrance to the school. Some of the patients had been there since 6:00 PM the previous night in order to be at the head of the line. They came from all over the Coachella Valley, from as far north as Palm Springs and as far south as the Mexican border. They came in busses, they came in cars or they walked. However they came, they came in a stream of people estimated to be 1500 strong.

This was the day of the Los Medicos Voladores (Flying Doctors) health fare at Coachella Valley High School. This was around the 30th Flying Doctors health fare in this community during the past 16 years. This was a signature event for Dr. David Morgan, MD, the man who started these missions and continues to direct them.



Vision patient line early in the morning

Most of the 80 Flying Docs flew or drove into Oasis Friday in order to be ready to see patients early Saturday morning. They came in 7 small airplanes and innumerable cars and trucks. Another 190 non-Flying Doctors volunteers came to support the event, including some local medical personnel and the Lions International Service organization's vision team. The most impressive volunteer statistic is that 93 Coachella Valley High School students who hope to become health professionals worked like beavers. They belong to a high school club dedicated to assist them in their aspirations. This is not the only unique thing about this school. It has 3000 students, 97% are Hispanic.

The dental team set up 27 portable dental chairs on Friday night, complete with the tools needed to do restorative work on teeth to tools for removing teeth that were beyond repair. The stations each had light, compressed air and a table for supplies. In addition, there was a central sterilization laboratory to make sure all the instruments being used on each patient were clean. This was a challenge for Linda Tabor, who orchestrated the sterilization program. Her husband, Dr. Larry Tabor, DDS directed the overall dental program.

Anita Wolf, RN and Jenny Stuhlmiller, RN made the 1037 mile round trip in our trusty old Buick a great time to talk and review family memories. The drive down the Sacramento Valley, across the Tehachapi and down the Coachella Valley was somewhat longer then it used to be in our Cessna 210. But, even though the temperature peaked at up to 108 degrees for all three days, the wonders of modern air conditioning made us comfortable all the way. The big negative was the \$5.00 a gallon gas at a Mobil station on Route 5.

When we arrived at the Royal Plaza Inn Friday night, Martha, the manager met us with her usual good humor and generous soul. She has always given us great discounts for our health

fare stay and great advice on what to see in the area. The Royal Plaza Inn makes a tremendous contribution to the success of our twice a year missions in this area.

After freshening up, most of us spent the evening at Ciro's Restaurant as guests of the owners.



Owner of Ciro's

This generous couple put on an all-you-can-eat Italian feed that fueled our bodies for the next day's grueling routine. The pizza, the lasagna, the salads, and the wine were all magnificent. And best of all, our private dining area provided the opportunity to meet and mingle with the other Flying Doctors members on this

mission. Fortunately, Ciro's is within walking distance of the Royal Plaza and thus we all had the opportunity to use some of the calories ingested Friday night.



LMV Ciro's Italian Restaurant Feed

The health fare was a big event for the community. Not only were doctors, dentists, optometrists and chiropractors seeing and treating patients, but there were many local organizations set up in the parking lot. Planned Parenthood and the local employment office were among the dozens of organizations plying their trade.

The dental clinic and the vision clinic were clearly the two biggest attractions. The 22 dentists saw and served 300 patients. Many patients had multiple problems; one of the men had 5 extractions. The dentists had one central sterilization laboratory. Linda Tabor supervised this critical activity where every instrument was cleaned and sterilized at high temperature in an autoclave.



A row of Dentists



Dentist and aide

The vision clinic processed over 400 patients by 15 California Lions Friends in Sight members plus a half dozen Flying Doctors volunteers. Of course, the High School student volunteers were also there in profusion. Patient's eyes were first measured with 4 automatic auto-refractors that printed out the prescription for the patient. The patient was then seen by one of the two optometrists who examined the patient's eyes and signed of on the prescription. The prescriptions were then processed by 5 computer operators who matched the prescriptions to the thousands of donated glasses in the building. The 3 best-fit eyeglasses were then tried on by the patients, who selected one of the pair. The other two pair were returned to inventory and the inventory was updated by subtracting the issued pair of eyeglasses from the inventory data base. This is the most efficient vision team I have ever witnessed in action.



Auto-refractor in action



Computer search for eye glass fit



New eye glasses

Dr. David Morgan, MD and Dr. Audry d'Andrea, MD lead the team of doctors who saw the patients with medical problems. The team saw 80 patients, however, in addition the medical staff did blood pressure and diabetes tests on 166 patients. The medical staff appeared to be more relaxed then the other teams. Even their patients were more relaxed.



Dr. Morgan



Patient

When the work was done on Saturday night, the team was the guest of the Fantasy Springs Casino for a fantastic buffet dinner. After that, back to the Royal Plaza for good nights sleep and up early for a group breakfast at Cactus Jacks. The way home was 9 hours while the thermometer hovered around 108 degrees.

I could go on and on about the wonderful medical and dental teams, but I hope this gives you an idea about our Oasis mission service. It may even motivate you to join us at the next mission.

More detail will be available on www.flyingdocs.org as the information from the trip flows into headquarters. Of course, the extensive above website also contains much, much more information including how to volunteer to go on one of our missions, how to donate, and etc. It will also have links to more photographs taken during the event, or you can see all of my photographs at KodakGallery.com. You can look at them and you can download them for free, including high definition versions. Or you can buy copies. If you order copies, ask that they not

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