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## President's Page

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## President's Page

### A Sense of Mission

**mission** (mish' un), n. (L. *missio* [omnis], a sending, sending away, from *missus*, pp. of *mittere*, to send).

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For the past four years I have had the privilege of serving as your Mission Committee chairman. Having been filled with a goodly amount of missionary zeal both from my past affiliation with the Mission Doctors' Association and my committee chairmanship, I felt it was time for some action. I would like to share with you just one of the incidents which occurred during the five weeks I spent helping the Crow Indians in Crow Agency, Montana.

Crow Agency is about 60 miles east of Billings, Montana and 70 miles west of Sheridan, Wyoming. The medical facility included a 35 bed hospital, complete with OB services, a nursery, one surgical suite, in-patient and out-patient X-ray, four pediatric beds and the remainder, medical beds. There were usually five full-time doctors (to cover the 175 clinic visits per day). In addition to the full-timers, several specialists held weekly clinics.

My first night on call at the hospital, I had been forewarned a woman was in labor. I couldn't seem to get out of the clinic that day. The number of patients was staggering, and there were only three of us to care for them. To make matters worse, I was the only doctor with any OB experience.

"I understand we have one cooking," I said to the nurse on duty.

"We certainly have. Her husband is in with her now. She's doing very well. This is her second child. Did anyone tell you what happened to her first?"

"No, but I've been reading about her."

The local papers had covered the child's death. It happened during the recent flood. From what I could glean from the two-month old, crumpled, yellow newspapers I'd found on the floor of my apartment, my patient's daughter had been playing in the backyard. Their property abutted the Yellowtail River. The river rose so suddenly, she was gone in an instant. Her pregnant mother instinctively went to the back door of their home to see how she was. All she saw was a sea of water, eddy currents everywhere! The rangers searched for three days before they found her limp body three miles downstream.

"Hi. My name is Doctor Frelinger. Could you step outside?" I asked the husband. "I'd like to examine your wife."

"Sure thing, Doc. See you in a little while, honey." He strode from the room.

"My goodness! You're not very far from delivering."

"Nurse, I wonder if you could wheel this young lady into the delivery room. She's not far from crowning."

"I think it must be a boy. You should see all the hair. Boys always seem to have all the hair at birth."

"That would be nice. He'd like that," she said between contractions.

"Easy now. Try not to push too hard. I'm holding the head back so that it doesn't suddenly pop out. That's it. You're doing fine. Easy . . . easy . . . there! How do you like THAT? It IS a boy. That should make Dad happy. How does it make Mom feel?"

"I couldn't feel better."

I wrapped the baby in a blanket and handed him to the circulating nurse. Mom had done very well. No perineal tears. All we had to do was wait for the placenta.

I finished writing the post-partum orders. As was my habit, I visited the new mother's room.

"I want you to know I've ordered something for just about every symptom you might have. If you have any pain, please don't put up with it. I realize you want to breast feed your baby. I haven't ordered anything that will affect the baby through your milk." She thanked me. Her husband shook my hand. "Thanks again, Doc." He looked like a man with a lot on his mind.

I checked all the criticals in the house. They all seemed to be doing fine. Heading back to the nurse's station, I could see the light was still on in my new mother's room. Her husband had left. She had a far-away look in her eyes.

"Hello, again. Would you like to talk?" I asked.

The tears came. Softly, they came. "You're new here. You probably don't know." She was sobbing now.

"I know," I told her. "I've read all about it."

She talked and talked, lightening her burden, about the girl they had lost, about the guilt she felt for leaving her daughter alone in the backyard, about the temptation to compare the two children, about her concern for her husband. She needed to get it all out. When she finished, I asked, "Are you religious?"

"Yes. I'm Catholic. My husband isn't."

"Have you spoken to Father Raymond?" (He was a Franciscan who was an incredible guiding light for the local Catholics, truly a remarkable missionary.)

"Yes. And we have another appointment with him."

"That's good. He'll be a great help to both you and your husband."

And he was.

My first charge to all the members is to get involved. We are in desperate need of Catholic medical missionaries, here and throughout the world.

Pax.

— David P. Frelinger, M.D.

### ***Are You Moving?***

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