

Korean Amputee Rehabilitation Under the Church World Service

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Director

Editor's Note: This article describes the Prosthetic Center in South Korea. John Steensma, formerly Instructor with the Michigan Crippled Children's Commission has recently arrived in Korea to be Director of the Center. Mr. Steensma will be remembered as the author of "A Guide for Parents of Child Amputees".

In the autumn of 1952 the program for rehabilitating amputees in Korea was begun by the Korea Church World Service as a post-war measure. Government statistics indicated that there were 15,000 veteran amputees and from 20 to 30,000 civilian amputees. Nothing was being done to provide these civilians with artificial limbs. They were hidden away in their homes, ashamed to appear in public and looked upon as under a curse. Those without homes, a large percentage refugees from North Korea, were drifting from place to place begging. Everywhere they were a social and economic problem. Many were facing slow death from malnutrition and disease due to exposure. Their number included many children as well as men and women.

To help meet the problem of caring for these tragic victims of shelling, bombing, land mines, hand grenades etc. the Korean Amputee Rehabilitation program was set up. Its purpose was not to provide permanent care for these handicapped people but to develop centers where they could receive artificial limbs, training in their use, vocational training when needed and such training as would help them to become reintegrated into society and normal productive living. To do this satisfactorily we believe the Christian approach and environment is essential. There is usually a basic emotional and psychological problem to be resolved before the amputee is able to resume normal living. This is best met thru a vital Christian faith.

There are four centers, in cities approximately 100 miles apart. Three are in mission hospitals. Necessary revisions and surgical care are provided in these centers. All the expense, above what the patient may be able to pay personally, is provided from the program's funds. Limb shops in each of these Centers, staffed with men trained by the program, make arms and legs for the amputees. At two of these Centers the program maintains a hostel for housing the amputees being trained in the use of their new limbs. In these hostels a religious program is carried on to minister to the spiritual needs of the patients both during hospitalization and walking training.

The fourth and largest Center is at the geographic center of South Korea. It is located two miles outside of the city of Taejon on a hill in the midst of a 150 acre track of land and is one department of The Union Christian Service Center. The U.C.S.C. is a Christian service project in which the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Missions of America, The Methodist Mission, The United Church of Canada, The Salvation Army of Great Britain, The Church World Service and local official agencies cooperate. Other departments are a demonstration farm, soil conservation and erosion control, a dairy, a Rural Leaders Training Institute, a Tuberculosis Rest Center, a Salvation Army Boys' Home for orphans and a Baby Fold to care for abandoned infants. These are located on what was six years ago barren eroding hills and gullies but is now a delightful wilderness of young trees surrounding the terraced rice paddies and farm plots.

The amputee center has some twenty simple Korean type buildings scattered among the young pine and locust trees. In the midst of these, at the highest point, stands the Chapel with its scaffold tower in which swings a large sweet toned bell purchased one Christmas by the amputees to express their gratitude. Each day following the early morning service the seats are moved to one side to prepare space and the apparatus for walking training. Then follow the hours of torturous but joyous effort to master the techniques of walking on artificial legs, practicing writing, eating, opening locks etc. using hooks for hands. Faces that were dark with despair, young people who thought only of how to end life, glow with new hope and determination to master their handicap and begin normal living again.

In the limb shop various types of arms and legs are made to suit the individual needs. To enable the workers to continue making limbs for amputees thru the years to come no matter what may happen in Korea and whether or not this program is continued in the future, techniques have been developed using entirely materials that can be found in Korea. In our own machine shop the trainees turn out all metal parts required, including joints, hooks etc.

With the exception of two or three persons the entire staff and teaching force is composed of amputees who came for help and have remained to share their skills with other amputees. This in itself has great value in building the morale of the trainees. Most of the new arrivals are down cast and hopeless. Many have sought to end their suffering by suicide. Soon their gloom vanishes, their facial expressions change. Visitors comment on the joyous atmosphere and one wrote back that the happiest people he saw in all of Korea were those he met at the Taejon Vocational Training Center.

The Vocational Training Center is equipped to accommodate 110 trainees. The period required for training in the use of new limbs is from two weeks to two months depending on the nature of the amputation and ability of the individual. For vocational training and preparation for going out to take one's place in competitive society requires, on an average, at least two years. Experience has shown that the psychological rehabilitation as well as training in skills, requires time.

Six limb shops have been opened manned by amputees trained in our centers. Thru these more than 2,600 limbs have been made and issued with careful training in their use. More than 1,680 persons have been given varying degrees and kinds of training in the centers. Of these about one fourth have been children. Many have been orphans. At present 14 children and young people are being cared for and helped to continue their education, attending schools within reach of the Taejon Center. Others are being given hand work and simple vocational training in the Center. Graduates from the training center have become self supporting as hospital technicians, merchants, watch repairers, tin workers, tailors, farmers, chicken and pig raisers, nurses and workers in orphanages, laborers, and other activities. Many have gone out to earn their livelihood in ways quite different from their training. The result of their training was to build in them self confidence and the will to make something of themselves.

During the early years of the program the majority of amputees helped were war casualties. Now about one fourth are the result of the war but the volume of new cases keeps the numbers coming for help at the same level.

For years this will be true because of the numerous train and bus casualties, especially among school children. Industrial accidents, disease, uncared for infections, snake bites, frost bites and a large number of other causes make the incidence of amputation exceedingly high in Korea.

What is the outlook for the future? This program has now become well established. It is known and respected throughout Korea. The need for such help to amputees is as great today as it was six years ago. The volume of cases applying for its services is as great as in the past. These victims of misfortune have not only become handicapped but in most cases if the amputation was not the indirect result of poverty it has brought poverty and ostracism. Consequently a high percentage must be helped as charity cases.

As this is being written two new cases have arrived which are typical of those continually coming. One is a fine looking bright farmer's son, 18 years old. Five years ago he and his school mates were removing a bomb from the road side. It exploded and blew off both of his legs. Ever since he has sat in his home with nothing to do but read. Then a few months ago he saw an article in the newspaper reporting on our program. He wrote to the Seoul Center, was received there to get legs and walking training. Now he has come for vocational training at the Taejon Center. The second boy was an orphan "shoe shine boy" plying his trade around the railway station. As he ducked under a train it started to move and his leg was severed above the knee. In an orphanage where he was placed a missionary found him suffering deep depression. He, too, was referred to the Seoul Center, where he received a leg and walking training. Now he is entering the Taejon Center for training in tailoring.

Scattered over South Korea are boys and girls as well as men and women in similar circumstance who are only now learning of this door of hope and new life. The funds received through Church World Service and many individual direct personal gifts and from other sources are scarcely sufficient due to rising costs. At the present time we are faced with serious financial problems. Unless additional funds become available it will be necessary to give up important parts of the program, limit the numbers cared for in the hospital centers and reduce the numbers in the Vocational Training Center. In the past only hopeless cases and those who were confirmed beggars have been turned away. If additional funds are not made available soon it will be necessary to turn away many needy and worthy young people who come to us as their only hope. Recent newspaper publicity reports, unsolicited, have spread the news of these centers resulting in an increase of applicants.

The new Director, Mr. John Steensma, has recently arrived from America and will be assuming responsibility in the autumn of 1959 after a period of language study. He is a double arm amputee himself, performing all normal activities even to driving an automobile using hooks for hands. An amputee from eighteen years of age and with twelve years of experience in the field of rehabilitation of the handicapped, he should bring new stimulus and advance to the Korea program. It will be a tragedy to retreat rather than advance in this undertaking. It is helping to solve basic spiritual, economic and social problems of post war Korean life.

Code of Ethics for the Artificial Limb and Brace Profession

The Federal Trade Commission has approved fair trade practices for the field of artificial limbs and for orthopedic appliances. Both codes have been adopted by the American Board for Certification as a guide for the Certified Prosthetist and Orthotist. The full text of the Codes may be obtained from the Board's Headquarters. The following digest is printed for ready reference.

It is an unfair trade practice:

- (1) To deceive purchasers or prospective purchasers as to any of the qualities of a prosthetic or orthopedic appliance, or to mislead purchasers or prospective purchasers in respect to the service of such appliances.
- (2) To infer an artificial limb is equivalent or nearly equivalent to the human limb, complies with any government specifications, or has the approval of a government agency unless such be wholly true or non-deceptive.
- (3) To fail to disclose to a purchaser, prior to his purchase of a prosthetic appliance, that the degree of usefulness and benefit will be substantially dependent upon many factors, such as the character of the amputation, condition of the stump, state of health, and diligence in accustoming oneself to its use.
- (4) To promise that any product will be made to fit unless such promise is made in good faith and industry member is possessed of the ability to fulfill such guarantee. A prosthetic device or an orthopedic appliance is not to be considered as fitting unless properly shaped for the body member to which it is applied, and in proper alignment and conformity with the physique of the person to wear such a product, and affords the optimum of comfort and use on the part of the wearer.
- (5) To deceive anyone as to his authority to represent and make commitments in behalf of a member unless such be fully true.
- (6) To use any testimonial or use any picture which is misleading or deceptive in any respect.
- (7) To demonstrate any appliance in a manner having the tendency or effect of creating a false impression as to the actual benefits that may be reasonably expected from it.
- (8) To use any guarantee which is false or misleading.
- (9) To represent that any appliance conforms to a standard when such is not the fact.
- (10) To publish any false statements as to financial conditions relative to contracts for purchase of appliances.
- (11) To engage in any defamation of competitors or in any way to disparage competitors' products, prices, or services.
- (12) To use the term "free" to describe or refer to any product which is not actually given to the purchaser without cost.
- (13) To *wilfully* entice away employees of competitors, with the purpose of injuring, destroying or preventing competition.
- (14) To take part in any concerted action with other members to wilfully fix prices.
- (15) To promote the sale of any appliance to any person who can not be expected to obtain reasonable benefit from such appliance.
- (16) To refrain from giving every assistance to doctors before and after amputation or crippling condition, or to fail to do everything possible to promote mutual trust and confidence between members and the medical profession.
- (17) To undertake to supply an artificial limb by mail-order specifications without personal fitting thereof unless conditions are such which make an exception desirable, and in any case, no misrepresentation shall be made as to fit.
- (18) To unduly exploit features of appliances less important than proper fit and alignment.
- (19) To fail to recognize that the interest of the amputee and the handicapped is the first concern and therefore any failure to make available to all of its members and the general public any improved technique that may be used as to making, fitting, aligning or servicing products shall be an unfair trade practice.
- (20) To pay anything of value to any doctor for the purpose of obtaining a referral of a patient by the doctor.

Further, the limb and brace profession desires to be an active and cooperative factor in all progressive developments of improved techniques that will contribute to the welfare and comfort of all who use its services.