

The Gift for Living Goes On

As the Lions of our Multiple District enter the third year of helping to heal the children of war

Jasmin came to this country last Christmas, a very sick little four-year-old suffering from cancer

He had little or no hope of surviving in his own country, where the medical services, hospitals, nurses and doctors are suffering the dreadful privations of war-damaged buildings and equipment, lack of resources, the inability to train and equip medical staff, and, perhaps most of all, the seepage of morale which goes hand in hand with conflict.

Jasmin was one of the lucky ones. He was brought out in what has become an historic partnership between the Lions of Great Britain and Ireland and Child Advocacy International, the charity dedicated to giving a chance to the children of war.

Six months on, Jasmin returned to Bosnia on June 12 after treatment at the Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool in the care of Dr Barry Pizer who administered chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment.

He will still need more treatment at home, but 99 per cent of the tumour in his lungs and abdomen has disappeared, and there is every hope that the remaining

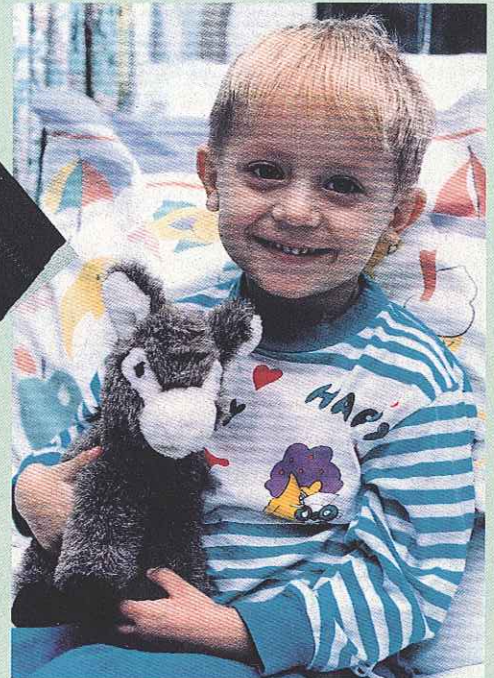
one per cent, in his lung, will respond to a final six months of treatment at home.

There he is being cared for by paediatrician Dr Edo Hasenbegovic, who is applying the skills he acquired during a three-month training period in Britain in the management of cancer in children, funded by Lions Clubs International and CAI, and is now running the cancer unit in Sarajevo. (Little Jasmin, whose father accompanied him to England, would have been separated from his mother and his baby brother for a year if Dr Edo had not received this training in the UK).

Jasmin's smile says it all, and is a tribute to the generosity of the Lions of Great Britain and Ireland and Child Advocacy International. He is just one of

The good news – half a million dollars worth of it! – is that the fight can go on. The Lions of our Multiple District and their supporters are unbounded in their generosity, but big money is constantly needed. See page 2 of this special supplement for the fantastic news of funding from the Lions' own mighty charitable trust fund, LCIF...

The cutting (left) featuring Jasmin, appeared in a special feature in *The Sunday Times Colour Magazine* about cancer in children. It's reproduction is gratefully acknowledged.



Jasmin in buoyant mood.

nearly 40 children brought to our Multiple District, the vast majority of whom have been treated, cured, and, who knows, may grow up to become the peacemakers of their unhappy homeland.

Just because she was there. PCC Phil Nathan, Chairman of the "Gift for Living" Appeal (see overleaf) took dozens of pictures portraying the suffering of this sad land, but couldn't resist this little girl exercising the rights of all small children – to be happy, healthy and playing, albeit within metres of the front line.



Building on the Past - Planning

PCC Phil Nathan, Chairman of the 'Gift for Living' Appeal, neatly combines the themes of the last and the current International Presidents, and sums up the story to date...

"A Gift for Living" began during the Lionistic year 1995/96, a project designed to medicate children from the war-torn former Yugoslavia for life-saving treatment not possible in their own country, largely due to the lack of medication, equipment, and specialist trained staff. Our Multiple District joined with Professor Dr David Southall of the charity Child Advocacy International to ensure that wherever possible children were brought here for urgent treatment, accompanied by a parent.

We have been very successful and to date some 39 such youngsters have now returned home, either cured or with their chances of a happy and healthy life immeasurably improved. The story of just one, Jasmin, appears in the front of this special supplement.

A year after we had started this project, for which our International Foundation LCIF had granted US\$75,000, and after we had transported trucks of humanitarian aid to the refugees and displaced people (again with support of LCIF, this time to the tune of US\$25,000), the Lions Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland embarked on an ambitious new project - to deliver medical care directly into the heart of the war zone.

For this we achieved a grant of US\$250,000 from LCIF, and a further DM250,000 was donated from EU funds.

Thus we were able to continue the work we had started - "Building Bridges with a Gift for Living" was born, reflecting the theme of Immediate Past President Augustin Soliva...

A Committee was set up to administer the funds and donations for this project, and on 21 August 1996 I travelled to Mostar with David Southall to examine the situation on the ground and set in motion Phase 2, to supply Intensive Care and High Dependency beds for hospitals in East and West Mostar.

We received invaluable help from the Lions on the spot, in particular District Governor Ivica Jakic.

The beds were vitally needed, as was the infrastructure to service them.

By April of this year the Intensive Care and High Dependency beds had been installed and were working in East Mostar, funded by LCIF, the EU and the Lions of MD105. By the end of May similar beds and equipment were to be in place in West Mostar, where much

for the Future

reconstruction work had to be done at the hospital.

Two paediatricians from Mostar, one from the East, Dr Hasan Vele, and one from the West, Dr Darinka Glamuzina, spent time at Keele University for specialist training in the use of the beds and equipment.

The story of the work of Angela O'Higgins, an Irish specialist paediatric nurse based with David Southall, is told on page 4 of this special issue. She is now the catalyst between the nurses of East and West Mostar, a true diplomat and a very popular character.

I have recently returned from a further trip, this time viewing Mostar's units, then on to Sarajevo and finally to Goradzne. I had the chance to meet many doctors, one of them Dr Edo Hasenbegovic who

not have survived without this life-saving care. The hospital on the West was almost complete. East and West, the staff were all working with a new commitment and proud of the life-saving facilities now at their fingertips.

Plaques commemorating the role of the Lions of MD105 are being prepared in two languages for both units.

When I visited the big hospital in Sarajevo talk of Lions Clubs International (until recently not known here) was linked in discussion about the Mostar project. David Southall and I looked at what Sarajevo might require if we should be crazy enough to 'Try it again'!

Then, the icing on the cake. I found that the chief doctor was attending her second Lions meeting that very evening. Of course I went along too, and found an excellent evening with 26 new Lions receiving their certificates of membership. The makings of a superb Club with a mixture of races and religions as its Charter Members.

The people of Sarajevo deserve the chance to rebuild their communities. If, looking ahead, we are able to support in some way all the different ethnic peoples, then surely we will have helped to 'Create and Foster a Spirit of Understanding among the Peoples of the World'.

Through the 'Gift for Living' Appeal, the Lions of MD105 have touched the hearts of many people, and now, underpinned by the renewed commitment from our great International Foundation, (see below), we have the chance to continue supporting Dr David Southall and Child Advocacy International in this great humanitarian project.



Appeal Chairman Phil making friends with local Lions.

spent a period in the UK for training. He brought Jasmin and a little girl, Mahira, who sadly was too ill for treatment, to England, leaving his pregnant wife and small child, to learn how to care for other children suffering from that most cruel of curses, cancer.

I was proud on May 8, to visit the virtually completed unit in East Mostar. In the previous ten days seven children had passed through the High Dependency unit, children who almost certainly would

Stop Press! LCIF *In Action*

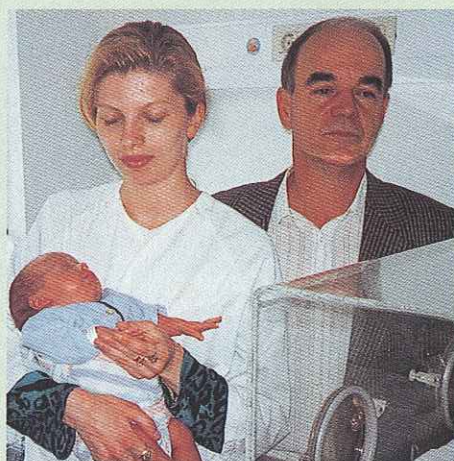
At the very moment this issue was being put to press, 'Gift for Living' Chairman Lion Phil received the fantastic news, directly from International President Augustin Soliva and before the official announcement, that MD105 had been awarded the largest grant on record, US\$500,000, from LCIF for 'Building Bridges with a Gift for Living'. This will be used to advance the Sarajevo Project, the latest phase of this historic achievement by the Lions of MD105 and Child Advocacy International.



The way things were. The beautiful old bridge of Mostar, destroyed in the war.



Children after receiving chemotherapy treatment.



Dr Hasan Vele with a mother and baby – a little life with some hope.



Dr Hasan Vele with new equipment in the East Mostar Hospital. Right is David Southall of Child Advocacy International.



The 'sterilisation unit'. Sheets being washed in the car park of Goradzne Hospital.



Child Advocacy's man on the spot, Field Officer Armin Alacic, with 'wheels'.

Help Build a Bridge of Hope

"By healing the suffering children of a nation, we may take one small step towards healing the hurts of the nation itself".

Lion Phil Nathan
Chairman of the 'Gift for Living' Appeal

Building Bridges
with a
"Gift for Living"

August/September 1997

Lion

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Angela's Gift:

Ask anyone in medical circles in Mostar, east or west, if they know Angela, and the answer is sure to be the local equivalent of 'You Bet!'

For this feisty Irish nurse first invaded Bosnia back in the spring with her own special blend of charm, expertise, hard work and a blithe disregard for the dodgy local conventions of politics, religion, race, and the prevailing medical heirarchy.

Angela, a lecturer in critical care paediatrics at Keele University, and formerly head of the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit at North Staffs Hospital, where she was on the staff of Professor David Southall, is currently undertaking her second trip to Mostar where this time she is spending three months, remaining until the end of September, once again volunteering her own time.

Back in March/April the aims of her trip were to organise the start of treatment for a child with poor growth development, to check out the equipment already delivered to both hospitals in Mostar, to assess the training needs of the nursing staff in the hospitals, and to start off a programme of teaching which would allow the safe delivery of paediatric and neo-natal intensive care nursing in both hospitals.

On her arrival she visited Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo, the children's block of which she describes as 'very grim', with basic equipment making the successful care of small babies difficult. She travelled on to Mostar, where she met

up with Child Advocacy International's Field Officer Armin and the two doctors, one from East and one from West Mostar, who had previously trained at Stoke. Angela worked in both hospitals, commuting on foot between the two, impervious to the dangers.

"I think that the fact that I was Irish helped a great deal – I was not perceived as being identified with any particular side", she says.

In the East, at the excellent new Brankovic Hospital, the Intensive Care room and equipment was ready to go. Angela set about training seven selected Intensive Care nurses.

"They were very interested in how we do things in Britain, and I was able to pass on training of hygiene practices and the development of paediatric nursing and critical care," she says. "By the time I left the nurses could use the equipment".

Dr Hasan Vele in East Mostar, says Angela, worked very long, very hard hours. 'I was shown the registration book and frequently up to 120 children were seen between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m.!

The hospital in West Mostar, Bijeli Brijeg, had its own problems. The equipment was still in the process of being shipped to the newly renovated children's unit during Angela's stay, so her opportunities for teaching on the equipment were limited.

West Mostar has many more doctors, and the workload is more evenly distributed.

Her current three-month visit will enable her to consolidate her previous work,

and develop it. She is particularly interested, once the basics have been established and the technical side of the intensive care of infants is running smoothly, in examining the culture of paediatric nursing.



Angela O'Higgins.

"The whole thing is much less child-friendly than it is here" she says. "It is traditional to treat children almost as if they were adults, just getting them into hospital and curing them, if possible, without making their stay happy and comfortable. It is not part of the culture to allow the mother to stay with the child, and white uniforms are still worn, in spite of the fact that these frighten small children. Perhaps we will be able to develop a fresh approach".

Certainly, says Angela, the local nursing staff were very keen to learn, and interested in western nursing methods.

Three months exposure to the force of nature that is Angela O'Higgins should make even the most iron-willed think again.

And danger? Angela simply doesn't recognise it. And like the bumble bee who flies because no one has told him that it can't be done, she goes right in there and does it.



All better now...



Little Jasmin, who features on the first page of this special supplement, enjoys a cuddle from Dr Edo Hasenbegovic, who took him home and is giving him further treatment there, and Meggie Szczesny, Charity Co-ordinator of Child Advocacy International. Dr Edo trained at Alder Hey Hospital, Liverpool, where Jasmin was treated, in the management of cancer in children.

Medical Team go out

Many children at Bosnia at this time are suffering from cancer, with poor and inadequate resources for their treatment, and health services generally severely impaired by the war.

The Lions of MD105, with Child Advocacy International, have funded a paediatric surgeon, a theatre nurse and a staff nurse from the great Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool, to travel to Bosnia to train medical staff at Sarajevo Hospital in the techniques of inserting catheters into children suffering from cancer.

All these medical experts are giving up their own free holiday time, giving their services for nothing.

The catheters are an important development in the administration of life-saving drugs to children. They provide a 'line', which is connected to the main vein in the chest of the child, through which chemotherapy drugs can be administered directly. The technique avoids the need for constant injections, is pain-free and is much less distressing for the child, who can run and play freely with the line in situ.

Dr Edo Hasenbegovic, (see photograph, left) reports that there are currently some 30 children in Sarajevo Hospital suffering from cancer.

The work of Child Advocacy International and Lions Clubs International aims to avoid the need for medical evacuation to the west of children suffering from such life-threatening sickness, by enabling medical teams in their homeland to develop the expertise to treat their own children.