

## Kindness On Tour — Northwest Medical Teams Travel To South America

■ Tribal member Teresa Bailey used her skills as a registered nurse to spread goodwill.

By Peta Tinda

For Tribal member Teresa Bailey, 49 is an important number.

After a week of nonstop ear, nose and throat surgeries — 49 in all — in the primitive conditions and sweltering heat of Parnaiba, Brazil, the host wanted to take the volunteers from the Northwest Medical Teams on a boat ride to show gratitude.

"When I saw the boat, I wasn't sure I wanted to go," said Tribal member Teresa Bailey with a laugh. Bailey, who is a registered nurse, went with the team as the surgery coordinator. "But, it was fine and they took us down the delta on the Amazon side.

"Parnaiba is right next to the equator," said Bailey. "So it was pretty hot the entire time. How hot? Dang hot, that's how hot it was."

For Bailey, who works at Willamette Ear, Nose and Throat in Salem, the recent trip meant the fulfillment of a life long dream.

"I've wanted to be a nurse since the third grade," said Bailey. "Even when I was in nursing school, I went with the intention of someday doing something like this."

Bailey, who lives in Grand Ronde, received her Registered Nursing degree through the Tribal Adult Education program in 1990.

"The Tribe really helped me," said Bailey. "I wouldn't have been able to go to nursing school, especially with three kids, without their help."

She feels that if you get something, you should give something back in return and this is her way of doing that.

The Spirit Mountain Community Fund sponsored Bailey, paying for the cost of her trip. The eight Northwest Medical Team members arrived in Parnaiba after two days of travel and immediately went to work at a furious pace.

"We had patients waiting for us as soon as we arrived," said Bailey. "We did 49 surgeries in two and a half days. We saw about 300 people altogether."

Most of the surgeries the team performed were ear, nose and throat type surgeries, such as repairing cleft palates or putting in ear tubes.

Each time a child had to have a surgery, they were given a beanie baby-type stuffed animal.

"As it turned out, the stuffed animals were about as important as the medicines, because we couldn't talk to the kids, so they were a real ice-breaker. They helped the kids feel more comfortable and less nervous. We also used them to show the kids what we were going to be doing," said Bailey.

The kids were also given a care pack with candy, gum, pencils, paper, dental floss and toothbrushes donated by the Tribal Dental Clinic.

One little girl who had surgery made Bailey a thank you card from the supplies in the pack, which has since become a cherished souvenir of her trip.

One of the things that struck Bailey was the condition of the hospital that they worked in.

"The difference between a hospital in America and one in Brazil was shocking. There's basically nothing



Photo by Peta Tinda

**Kind** — Tribal member Teresa Bailey, the daughter of the late Elaine Dolly Smith and the granddaughter of Tribal Elder Mabel Gaston, recently traveled to Parnaiba, Brazil as part of a team of medical professionals — Northwest Medical Teams — who cared for local residents for a week. Bailey and the team saw 300 people in all and performed 49 surgeries.

there. No beds, no wheelchairs, no sheets and everything that was there was very old. There were hooks on the wall, so people could hang their hammocks to sleep. There was a chalkboard for us to write patient information on, but there wasn't any chalk."

Another thing Bailey noticed was the divide between the rich and the poor.

"There's a real class difference in Brazil," said Bailey. "There's not a lot of middle class. Either you have money or you don't. People don't realize how good we have it here. If you need health care here in America, chances are you'll get it. In other countries, if you don't have money, you don't get care,

you just die."

Knowing that the patients she was helping wouldn't get cared for otherwise made her volunteer service especially meaningful, said Bailey.

"The people we were seeing were the poor, those who couldn't pay," said Bailey. "In Parnaiba, there's another hospital for people who have money. But there's no hospital for the people we treated - poor people. We certainly improved the quality of people's lives.

"I used to think that there's too much poverty and too much suffering in the world for anyone to make a difference. But we made a difference in 49 people's lives and I feel pretty good about that."

## It Is All About Making Connections

■ Tribal newspaper welcomes new staff writer.

By Peta Tinda

Ron Karten, the new *Smoke Signal's* writer, is originally from New York, but has lived in Oregon for 20 years.

He is a long-time freelance writer and brings a wealth of experience to the newspaper. He lives in Dayton, with his wife Cathy, who is an English and second language teacher.

He has a daughter in high school, Sarah, and a son, Joe, who is in college. He also has a 12 year-old cat named Peaches.

"I really like my work," said Karten of his new job. "I really like talking to people and writing about people. I'm just floored by the people I meet. Everybody's been wonderful - the people are kind, considerate and generous with their time. It's been a wonderful experience."

Karten has written for several different magazines, including *Feature*, *Oregon Business* and *Interview*. He also worked at the Oregon State Legislature from 1993 to 1997, writing for State Senator John Lim. He also runs a small business from his home making

business cards.

Karten's freelance writings have taken him all over the world, including a trip to Burma, where he wrote about civil rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi. Kyi won the national vote in 1991 by a 90 percent margin, but was put under house arrest by the military dictatorship that was in power in an effort to silence her. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.

"We had to pose as tourists to get into the country to do the interview," said Karten.

Karten said his favorite piece of all was a story he did for *Feature* magazine about a series of killings in Queens, N.Y. Disputes between low-level gang members doing hits on each other had left a wake of dead in their path.



Photo by Brent Merrill

"I talked to the police and they told me where some of the killings happened. One of the places was

this little bar in Queens. I was standing outside of the place taking pictures when suddenly this huge guy comes out. It was at that point that I thought 'uh oh, Ron, you've gone too far.' But it was okay. That was one of my first stories."

Karten has had many adventures in his life - a key to making a well-rounded writer.

Karten said the best part of his job is making connections with new people.

"You know that picture in the Sistine Chapel of God and man with the fingers and they're about to touch? I always think of that. I live for making connections. And it happens in all different places."

In what little spare time he has, Karten likes to do woodworking in his garage and enjoys hanging out with his family. He also plays golf.

"But I don't keep score," he said. "I always look forward to getting to know people," said Karten. "I want to be a specialist in the people I work with. I look forward to really understanding what's going on and being an informed writer." ■