



CHARLOTTE PIPER JOINED TURIA PITT'S INCA TRAIL CHALLENGE IN JULY. IN HER OWN WORDS, SHE TELLS THE STORY OF THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL JOURNEY THAT SHE MADE.

When I was eight, I received third degree burns on my thighs. For forty years I kept my scars and secret hidden from many of my friends.

Following Turia Pitt gave me the courage to own my story. I joined her Inca Trail challenge in July and was happy to be able to thank her in person, whilst raising funds and awareness for Interplast.

I connect with Interplast both because I am a burns victim and I understand the importance of reconstructive surgery on burns survivors, and because I am also in the medical industry.

When we arrived at the start of the trail, I was feeling a mixture of excitement, trepidation and nervousness. I had been training for five months.

The trek took us through many different landscapes; from rainforest to snow-capped mountains to barren dusty trails, and through extremes of temperature – from 25 degrees Celsius to minus 7 degrees.

We hiked to an altitude of 4,200m, which was a challenge even for the fittest team members. But through it all, we had each other's backs

and we became like family.

The moment that stands out most in my mind happened on the fourth morning.

The night before, we had hiked with only our headlamps to light the rocky path along a mountain ridge to the campsite, and we arrived well after dark.

We knew the location was going to be spectacular, but nothing could prepare us for what awaited when we opened the tent zipper the next morning. We found ourselves perched atop a mountain, far above the clouds.

To top it off, that morning was Turia's birthday, so celebrations ensued.

There were feelings of immense joy, relief and satisfaction and even some tears were shed when we reached the Sungate at Machu Picchu later that day.

To know that as a team we had raised more than \$300,000 for Interplast was one of the highlights and unlike other trips, this one has changed me forever.

I learnt that I am capable of more than I often think. Having a clear vision, a plan and belief makes the impossible possible.

My husband, John, and I are going to do the Oxfam 100km Trailwalker next September and we're hoping to walk the Milford Track next year too.

Turia is vivacious, fun loving and incredibly generous with her time.

If I could give some advice to anyone joining Turia for her next challenge, it would be this: Take the time to get to know this strong woman and be prepared to be amazed at her super fitness level!

The hike will be tough at times but remember the reasons you signed up for it. Support your fellow hikers as you're all in it together, and be proud of your achievement.



Charlotte with Turia

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INSIDEINTERPLAST

REPAIRING BODIES AND REBUILDING LIVES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

SPRING 2015

"THE SURGERY FRANK HAD WILL ALLOW HIS HAND TO GROW PROPERLY AND HE WILL BE ABLE TO USE IT FOR HOLDING A BALL, OR HOLDING A CUP. HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT BEFORE."

Dr Frank Lin
Interplast volunteer

Four-year-old Frank, pictured with Interplast volunteer nurse Helen Chadwick, sustained burns when he fell into an open fire, and the resulting contractures rendered him unable to use his left hand. Photo: Dr Frank Lin, Interplast volunteer surgeon.

IN FRANK'S HANDS

SURGERY GIVES TODDLER A BETTER FUTURE

When Cyclone Pam destroyed their village in Vanuatu this March, Frank and his family had no choice but to live outdoors.

There was no power, so many of the newly homeless villagers resorted to using open fires, creating hazards for youngsters like Frank.

In addition to the hardship of being hit by the most intense cyclone in the southern hemisphere this year, Frank had a fall and landed in a fire, badly burning both of his hands.

As time went on, contractures caused his left wrist to flex permanently, meaning he was unable to use his hand or even straighten his arm.

In November this year, an Interplast team travelled to Vanuatu thanks to the Pacific Island Program, which is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. On the team was first-time volunteer Dr Frank Lin.

The two Franks – patient and surgeon – formed an instant bond, perhaps thanks to their shared name, or perhaps thanks to 'little' Frank's big bright smile.

"He was just such a great kid," says Dr Lin. "He was incredibly open and friendly. He was smiling and chatting with the anaesthetist and playing with him," he adds.

"I never met his mother but his father



A very happy Frank cuddles two teddies after his procedure.

accompanied him the entire way. They had travelled for days to get to Port Vila for the surgery."

Dr Lin and senior Interplast surgeon Dr Kirstie MacGill operated on Frank to release the contractures and put him on the path to regaining the use of his left hand. Dr Sam Kemuel – a local surgical registrar – assisted them.

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TURIA'S NEXT CHALLENGE:

THE KOKODA TRAIL - MAY 2016 VISIT www.interplast.org.au to donate

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A HISTORY OF CHANGING FUTURES

'I NO LONGER HIDE MY BURNS'

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PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

ACROSS

26

LOCATIONS

IN

17

COUNTRIES

IN 2014/2015

INTERPLAST CONDUCTED

1,652

CONSULTATIONS

AND PERFORMED

801

MEDICAL PROCEDURES



FROM P1

IN FRANK'S HANDS



Dr Frank Lin, who operated on 'Little Frank'.

"Sam plays an important role in the organisation and the follow-up of the patients we see and operate on," Dr Lin says.

The surgery was successful, and Frank bounced back quickly, enthusiastically accepting not one but two of the teddy bears knitted for Interplast patients by Rotary volunteers.

"Frank still needs several operations. But we were able to make a big difference for him," says Dr Lin.

It wasn't only his smaller namesake that touched Dr Lin on his first journey with Interplast. The genuine and unassuming gratitude of all of the patients he saw also stands out in his mind.

"I think most of these patients and their families are just very grateful, they're very friendly and not demanding and they're always showing their gratitude," Dr Lin reflects.

The gratitude remains, even when Interplast volunteers are the bearers of bad news.

"Probably the most telling thing is when we have to tell patients that we can't help them this time, and rather than getting upset – I mean some people walk a long way – they say 'Thanks so much, we'll try again next year.'"



Frank's hand before Dr Lin performed surgery to release his burns contractures.



Frank's hand after surgery, with the wrist now released and able to extend.

PATRON REFLECTS ON A LEGACY

PROFESSOR DONALD MARSHALL AM, HELPED TO FOUND INTERPLAST IN 1983. VOLUNTEERS ARE AT THE HEART OF INTERPLAST AND HAVE BEEN FOR THE LAST THREE DECADES. HE REFLECTS ON WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO THE ORGANISATION.

Interplast is not for everyone.

Plastic surgeons who become involved in Interplast are fundamentally more interested in reconstructive surgery. Having spent fifty years in plastic surgery, one is well aware how reconstructive surgery has great rewards, both for the patients and their treating practitioners.

One patient who sticks out in my mind was a little girl who'd had a dog bite to her nose. She was seven years old and she was very unhappy about the missing tip of her nose. I elected to perform a relatively simple operation. This required a skin and cartilage graft from the ear to replace the tip of the nose, a so called 'free graft'. Experience was necessary to know how big the graft could be in order to produce a successful outcome. Fortunately there was an excellent result. She wrote a beautiful card for me in her little hand saying "Dear Professor Marshall, thank you for making me me again".

It is not only through repairing bodies that Interplast helps communities reach their potential. The organisation has always been committed to offering training to allied medical professionals, both in their own countries and by facilitating visits to Australia and New Zealand as required.

Interplast's work changes people's futures and the volunteers get to see the tangible difference they have made because the results of reconstructive surgery are often more immediate than those in other areas of surgery. Deformity from congenital abnormality or injury, frequently means an individual's full potential may not be realised. Reconstructive surgery with a few instruments, but with the necessary expertise, and with the support of allied health professionals, can help such people and give them a normal life, and they then can contribute so much more to their communities.

Bangladesh provides an excellent example. I first visited Bangladesh in 1975 after the revolution, and medical services were in disarray. There was no plastic surgeon. At the request of the Australian Government, I and two other plastic surgeons spent over a period of three months there and established a basis for training. Now we have regular visits from teams and the ancillary services, such as nursing, physiotherapy and speech therapy, which have evolved with the passage of time.

The key to Interplast's success is respect for our in-country partners. What we are doing is being good neighbours; going to friends, offering help, but only when invited.

One hopes ultimately there would be no need for us in our partner countries.

FORTUNATELY THERE WAS AN EXCELLENT RESULT. SHE WROTE A BEAUTIFUL CARD FOR ME IN HER LITTLE HAND SAYING "DEAR PROFESSOR MARSHALL, THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME ME AGAIN".



Professor Donald Marshall AM (right) with Interplast President David Inglis (left)

PROFILE OF A FOUNDING MEMBER PROFESSOR DONALD MARSHALL AM

1957

Graduated from the University of Melbourne Medical School

1962

Obtained F.R.A.C.S after training as a surgeon at Royal Melbourne Hospital

1964

Appointed Robert Fowler Traveling fellow of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria

1968

Appointed Head of Plastic Surgery at Prince Henry's Hospital

1974-1976

Chairman of the Division of Plastic Surgery of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

1991

Appointed Associate Professor of Surgery at Monash University and established training program in plastic surgery at Monash Medical Centre

1997

Awarded Medal of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

1999

Made a member of the Order of Australia

**YOUR SUPPORT HELPS
US CHANGE FUTURES
TODAY IN VANUATU**

Interplast has been working in Vanuatu since 1985 providing:

- 28 activities to date
- 1,365 consults
- 867 surgical procedures

- Cyclone Pam, which hit Vanuatu in March, was the most intense tropical cyclone in the southern hemisphere in 2015 and caused 15 -16 fatalities
- UNESCO estimates that 132,000 people were affected by Pam, with 54,000 of them children. One on island, 95% of homes were destroyed

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CREDIT CARD DETAILS *(please circle):*

Visa Mastercard

Name on Card: _____ Card Number: _____

Expiry Date: ____/____ Signature: _____

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☐ Please send me information on how I can remember Interplast in my will.

Title: _____ First name: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____ Suburb: _____

State: _____ Post Code: _____ Email: _____ Mobile: _____

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