

Nurse Extends Helping Hand Across the World

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

Humanitarian nurse Mary Lightfine always wanted to live and work in other countries, helping the less fortunate—thanks to Tarzan. As a little girl, Lightfine was mesmerized watching the jungle hero swinging across her black-and-white television set.

“He planted a seed of curiosity in my brain that grew,” she said. “I remember the first time I saw him speaking fluent Swahili to the natives with their painted faces and feathers in their hair. I was amazed there were people like that out there and I wanted to go live in a tree with Tarzan and experience these people. That feeling never went away.”

That memory, coupled with her experience as an emergency room nurse in low-income hospitals throughout the country, convinced Lightfine to pursue her passion.

“I met many patients who weren’t thankful for the care we gave them,” she said. “They would kick and spit on us, and call us every bad word you could think of. I could count on one hand the number of people in five years who said thank you.”

After moving to Los Angeles to work at L.A. Children’s Hospital, Lightfine’s attitude changed.

“We treated Mexican immigrants who were so thankful for the care they received,” she said. “Parents would stay to help us suture their children and listen to our



Mary Lightfine

instructions. They were kind, caring and always returned for their follow-up. I said to myself that I should work in another country if I wanted to feel appreciated.”

In February 1992, after sixteen years as an ER nurse, Lightfine moved to Mogadishu, Somalia, where she quickly discovered that life didn’t imitate art.

“It was a total culture shock,” she said. “It was nothing like the Tarzan movies. I knew that it was a war zone but I didn’t expect war to be as scary as it was and didn’t realize I would be so at risk.”

Lightfine and the people who accompanied her lived in a compound behind 12-foot walls, surrounded by barbed wire. When they rode in a vehicle to and from the hospital, an armed guard sat perched on top of the roof with an AK-47, ready to defend them.

“At first, I was petrified,” she said. “We were basically prisoners in our compound. Eventually, we got immune to the violence and it didn’t seem so frightening after several months.”

In addition to Somalia, Lightfine has lived and worked in over 76 countries. During the past 12 years, she delivered babies in Sri Lanka, brought food to remote villages by helicopter in Nicaragua and to starving refugees in South Sudan, and was one of the first to provide medical aid to Kosovar refugees.

Lightfine details her experiences in her book, *Nurses, Nomads and Warlords*. Her experiences also inspired her to start Nurse Without Boundaries, her own lecture and writing-based organization, and Volunteers Without Boundaries.

“The purpose of my lectures is to demonstrate through stories how one person can make a difference and the power of caring,” she said. “Volunteers Without Boundaries came about because every time I lectured at colleges, students approached me about wanting to volunteer. Many organizations didn’t accept students. I founded this group so students had an avenue to follow if they wanted to volunteer.”

One volunteer she’s inspired is her husband of two years, Paul Rooy.

“We’re both pilots so we fly medical supplies, veterinary supplies, and educational training supplies to various countries,” said Lightfine. “We travel to about 10 different countries every year. We returned recently from Africa where we were working with a rural community in Uganda to improve water availability, sanitation and health. We’re still collaborating with them and will return.”

Lightfine still has more goals she’d like to accomplish.



Lightfine on an emergency run in Chiapas, Mexico.

“In addition to what I’m already doing in Africa, I hope to do something more creative with marketing and computer skills,” she said. “I’d like to teach people how to market their ideas or sell their handmade items online.”

Another goal of hers is to try to find healthcare for Americans.

“This is a big passion of mine,” she said. “Our healthcare system needs revamping. I’m gathering as much information as I can on healthcare issues to see what we can do.”

Although it seems like a daunting task, no task is insurmountable for Lightfine.

“Everyone does a job where they earn certain rewards,” she said. “For me, knowing that I made a difference in someone’s life is my reward. Knowing I can help make this world a better place keeps me going.”

For more information on Mary Lightfine, visit her Web site at www.marylighfine.com.

CORAZON

The Heart & Vascular Experts

CONSULTING • MANAGEMENT RESOURCES • RECRUITMENT

5000 McKnight Road, Suite 300
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15237

8240 Cleary Boulevard, Suite 2414
Plantation, Florida 33324

p 412.364.8200 f 412.364.8201

www.corazoninc.com

Corazon is a recognized leader in strategic heart and vascular program development, assisting clients through the full spectrum of cardiovascular consulting, management resources, and recruitment services. The Corazon team uses proven methodologies and approaches to offer clients across the country the tools necessary to remain viable in today’s competitive marketplace.

Consulting Services

- Business Plans
- Strategic Business Plans
- Joint Ventures and Hospital-to-Hospital Affiliations
- CON Application Development and Expert Testimony
- Implementation Support and Didactic Education

Management Resources

- Interim and Mentorship Support for Service Line Administrators, Cath Lab/ CVOR Directors, and Educators

Recruitment Services

- Service Line Leadership
- Physicians (Cardiologists, CT & Vascular Surgeons)
- Key Service Line Departmental Managers & Directors
- Clinical Nurse Specialists/Educators

Consulting, Management Resources, and Recruitment Services for Outstanding Heart and Vascular Programs

Position yourself for the future at one of America’s top schools of nursing.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing is ranked third in number of National Institutes of Health nursing research grants awarded and seventh overall in the 2008 edition of *U.S. News & World Report’s* “America’s Best Graduate Schools” with several specialties ranked in the top 10.

Clinical facilities include a national premier medical center.

<p>Baccalaureate (BSN) Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN Options • Accelerated Second Degree BSN 	<p>2 Doctoral Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSN to DNP - MSN to DNP • Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSN to PhD - MSN to PhD
<p>Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) Including 4 majors with 12 areas of concentration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse Anesthesia • Nurse Practitioner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with 6 areas of concentration • Clinical Nurse Specialist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with 2 areas of concentration • Nurse Specialty Roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with 4 areas of concentration 	<p>Research Emphasis Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent Health • Critical Care • Chronic Disorders • Genetics • Technology • Women’s Health

University of Pittsburgh
School of Nursing

Advancing the Science and Practice of Nursing
www.nursing.pitt.edu
 1-888-747-0794