

by Julia Q. Long

# Giving So Much, Asking So Little

The hemophilia patients of Belize have not received a Project SHARE<sup>SM</sup> shipment since 2003, largely due to lack of requests from Belize's national hemophilia organization. But two days before Christmas 2005, factor VIII was shipped at last to three young boys living an hour north of the capital, Belize City. The success of this shipment indicates that the Belize Hemophilia Society may at last be developing a leadership role in accessing outside resources, and in communicating with local patients.

LA Kelley Communications President Laurie Kelley visited Belize in May 2001 to help hemophilia leaders establish their fledgling national society. During her visit, Laurie met George Dyck, a Mennonite farmer whose eight-year-old son Peter had just been diagnosed with factor VIII deficiency. Peter was suffering from a foot contracture that made it difficult for him to walk.

The Dyck family is part of the flourishing Mennonite community of Orange Walk Town. The Mennonites originated in the Netherlands more than 400 years ago, and the first Mennonites arrived in Belize in 1958 seeking freedom from religious persecution and the pressures of modern society. Currently more than 3,500 members live in agricultural communities throughout Belize, alongside Spanish, Indigenous Maya, East Indians and Chinese settlers. Mennonites have retained their language, which dates to the eighteenth century and resembles both Dutch and German.

Mennonites' farming methods utilize oxen rather than modern machinery, but are so efficient that they are the most successful farmers in Belize, supplying much of the country's produce. Mennonites practice a strict form of Protestantism, and carefully exercise proper moral behavior at all times. They refuse to bear arms, use contraception, pay certain taxes or support the

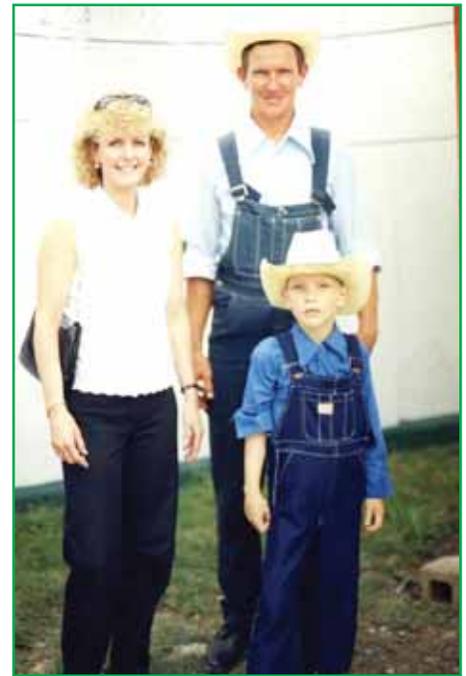


Nerve damage from bleeding: Peter's foot.

military. For these reasons, they subsist without government-assisted welfare support, and in the Dycks' case, without government-sponsored factor.

The Belizean government signed a special agreement granting the Mennonite community exemption from military service and certain taxes, and guaranteeing them freedom to practice their religion. In addition, Mennonites can freely practice their own form of local government, and run their own schools, banks and businesses. Belize is considered the most peaceful country in Central America, and has been recognized worldwide for its commitment to preserving the cultures of its people, and for its unique environmental resources.

Since 2003, the Dyck family has added two more sons—Gerhard, age four, and Franz, age three—who also have factor VIII deficiency. These blond German farmers have been unable to access factor until now. With the national society and the Dyck's family doctor, Project SHARE plans to arrange a special surgery to correct Peter's foot contracture. Meanwhile, we hope that Gerhard and Franz will receive enough factor to avoid their brother's unfortunate condition. Project SHARE is pleased to help the Dyck family with factor, and to continue guiding the Belize Hemophilia Society toward making life easier for the patients who contribute so much to the economy and culture of Belize—and who ask for so very little in return. ☺



No factor in Belize: Laurie Kelley meets the Dyck family in 2001.



To make a donation of factor concentrate or money, or to obtain advice on donating factor internationally, please contact Julia Long at [julia@kelleycom.com](mailto:julia@kelleycom.com)

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