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Carolyn Kimmel is a graduate of Gordon College in Wenham, MA, who lives in Dillsburg, PA., with her husband, Mark, and three daughters. She began her writing career at the *York Dispatch/York Sunday News* in York, PA., covering everything from cops and politics to agriculture and teen pregnancy, and winning awards from state and national groups. A freelancer since 2000, she has written two books on missionaries and now writes health news for the *Harrisburg Patriot-News/PennLive* in Harrisburg, PA.

Although their work has attracted international attention, the doctors say their greatest joy comes in serving God through serving the people of Macha.

Faith and Service

Carolyn Kimmel won first prize and \$10,000 in the 2013 Amy Writing Awards, which recognizes Bible-based articles that appear in secular publications. For more information about entering this year's competition, please visit the Amy Writing Awards section of the WORLD website (<http://www.worldmag.com/amyawards/>). The following article originally appeared in the Dillsburg (PA) Banner on Oct. 24, 2013.

By Carolyn Kimmel

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon at Dr. John Spurrier's house when he got a call from the hospital. A child had a peanut stuck up her nose. Could Dr. Spurrier come over?

Grabbing a paperclip from his table, the doctor from Dillsburg sauntered across the dirt road and into the one-story Macha Mission Hospital, Zambia, where he headed for the pediatric ward and found the distraught child and mother.

"Hold her still for me," he said and, after looping one end of the paperclip, inserted it into the child's nose and pulled out a perfectly oval peanut, no doubt shelled by the child's older sibling earlier in the day.

"Works every time—the best thing there is for removing a foreign object from the nose," Spurrier said with a smile and told the relieved mother, "She can go home."

Peanut extraction is fairly common in this community, where the nuts grow bountifully and offer an important source of protein for an often malnourished people.

This procedure was easy; others are not. Sometimes, the night before an unfamiliar surgery, Spurrier checks his medical books to get a quick primer. Sound incredible? If he doesn't do the surgery, no one else will—so he might as well try.

Not far down the dusty, washboard road from Macha Hospital, Dr. Phil Thuma, another doctor from Dillsburg, does groundbreaking research on mosquitoes and malaria.

The two doctors began working at Macha Mission Hospital in the mid-1970s as missionaries for the Grantham-based Brethren in Christ Church and have worked there intermittently ever since. They provide medical care to a catchment area of about 160,000 people, many of whom walk, bike or take an ox cart across miles of African bush to seek treatment.

"Medicine here is interesting and challenging, but more than that, I am really needed here," said Spurrier, formerly an emergency room doctor at Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill.

One evening, Spurrier came home nearly 12 hours and 22 surgical procedures after leaving the house. Though certainly tired, he smiled. It had been a satisfying day, like so many of his his days practicing medicine in primitive, short-staffed conditions far inferior to where he could practice in the United States. If he hadn't set that arm, amputated that leg, drained that cyst, resected that bowel, these people may have died.

If he was lucky, he could end the day with a hot shower—if the water came on and the electricity didn't go off so that the water heater he rigged up in the shower would work.

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Editor:

Mary Jackson

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The Spurriers have running water for only two or three hours in the evening. Every night when the pipes whistle and groan, signaling the water's appearance, Esther Spurrier, John's wife, begins the laborious task of gathering water in barrels for the next 24 hours.

"Even the uncertainty of our water feels like a blessing when I consider so many African women who have to gather water and carry it back to their village on their heads," she said. "Water is very heavy!"

Africa is full of wondrous sights—elephants lumbering along the banks of the Zambezi River, Victoria Falls spilling over an impossibly wide expanse of cliff, a nighttime sky pierced with bright white stars—but it also has its share of sobering sights.

An abundance of postage stamp-sized homes with thatched roofs and scant furnishings dot the African bush. There is great poverty, dirty water, deadly disease.

In the three decades since they arrived, the two Dillsburg doctors have worked hard to make a large dent in two of Africa's most serious health problems—malaria and HIV transmission.

Using an innovative "test and treat" approach, the doctors have been able to identify people who test positive for these maladies and treat them before they have symptoms in order to curb transmission to others.

For HIV-infected people, that means starting antiretroviral medications sooner. Although the drugs are not a cure, if taken correctly, the virus can't be found in the blood five months later.

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the Macha area has decreased dramatically, with HIV in newborns down from almost 15 percent in 2002 to 7.2 percent in 2012, Spurrier, 65, said. The drugs also curb transmission of HIV from an infected partner to an uninfected partner.

Cases of malaria—once the No. 1 killer at Macha—have dropped by 98 percent, with only one or two deaths a year, said Thuma, 63, who used to see two or three children die daily from malaria.

Such widespread testing was successful, the doctors said, because their longtime presence in the community earned them an important thing: Trust. Thuma and Spurrier aren't just white-coated professionals who see patients; they are community members who—with their wives—live and go to church alongside the local Zambians, speak their tribal Tonga language and forge personal friendships.

Thuma's roots go down deep into the African soil. He was 4 years old when his father, Dr. Alvan Thuma arrived in Macha in 1954 as a missionary doctor—the first and only doctor in a 40-mile radius. The elder Thuma drew up plans for the Macha Mission Hospital and, after seeing patients in the morning, worked alongside the local Zambians, firing bricks to build the hospital that would bring them good medical care.

Now, years later, Phil Thuma is most gratified that the Macha Research Trust he founded offers steady work to nearly 70 local Zambians who might otherwise be struggling to make a living from subsistence farming.

The research trust, in partnership with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg Public School of Health, operates a molecular biology lab where some stunning discoveries have been made. In 2007, they were the first to discover that malaria could be detected from saliva rather than just blood.

"A lot of people predicted we couldn't run a lab like this out in the bush, 40 miles from the nearest town, but I'm stubborn enough that I love to prove people wrong," said Thuma, who also does research on HIV and tuberculosis.

Although their work has attracted international attention, the doctors say their greatest joy comes in serving God through serving the people of Macha.

"God put the children of Africa on my heart. I feel responsible to see that kids in Africa, particularly Macha, have a chance to grow up, regardless of measles, malaria or HIV," said Thuma, who formerly worked as a pediatrician at Hershey Medical Center and volunteers in pediatrics at Macha Mission Hospital.

His wife, Elaine, who grew up in Dillsburg with her parents Walter and Thelma Nell, became a registered nurse but saw her most important work as supporting and encouraging her husband.

"I never imagined myself, a girl from the small town of Dillsburg, visiting anywhere in Africa—let alone living there," she said. "We often quote Psalm 115:1 as our theme song; 'Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.'"

When people ask why they serve, it's easy for them to quote the words of Matthew 25:40—"Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"—as the impetus for their work.

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Faith and Service (Continued from Page 2)

However, they say, what people may not realize is that in blessing others, there is great blessing.

"People are so grateful for whatever we can do. They give us chickens and peanuts and name their kids after us." John Spurrier said. "It's so gratifying to look around and be able to say, 'People's lives were changed here because of what I did.'"

"The relationships and friendships we have built with people in the community and the larger church have nourished and encouraged us," Esther Spurrier added. "Some of these people we have lived and worked with now for decades, and the love runs deep and strong."

Unfortunately, the doctors said, there is no one standing in line to take their place. Doctors come for short-term work, but none has committed to staying. Spurrier is currently the only Brethren in Christ missionary doctor engaged in AIDS work.

A person doesn't need to be perfect—or even be an evangelist—to be a missionary, the doctors said.

"Our philosophy of missions is that God gifts people in the Kingdom of God in different ways," Spurrier said. "We have a holistic view—that God is interested in our minds and our bodies. We think good research and making people well makes God happy as much as preaching to them about Jesus."

The doctors wish that they could convince other American doctors that practicing medicine in Africa offers a richness not found in money or material things.

"To see a 1-year-old child go from almost dead with malnutrition and tuberculosis to a smiling, healthy child within a year; you couldn't pay me enough to see that happiness," Phil Thuma said.

(Dillsburg resident Carolyn Kimmel traveled to Africa recently to work on a biography of Alvan Thuma, a missionary doctor who lived and worked in a remote area of the African bush in the mid-1950s.)

Published in the Dillsburg (PA) Banner on Oct. 24, 2013. Used with permission.

Writing Help on the Web

► Need help editing? Type or paste your text on heminwayapp.com. This web page uses different colors to highlight common writing errors such as passive voice, over-reliance on adverbs, or long and confusing sentences.

► Stay-at-home mothers interested in free-lance writing will find helpful, practical tips in Christina Katz's purse-size book "Writer Mama: How To Raise A Writing Career Alongside Your Kids," (Writer's Digest Books, 2007).

► Five reasons the exercise of writing helps improves your life: www.fastcompany.com/3023105/

► Stay on top of media and publishing news and trends at poynter.org

2013 Amy Writing Award Winners

Carolyn Kimmel, \$10,000 First Prize: Faith and service: Dillsburg doctors make a difference in the African bush; *The Dillsburg Banner*; Dillsburg, PA

Jeff Chu, \$5,000 Second Prize: Now Serving Soul Food; *Beacon*; New York, NY

Billy Watkins, \$4,000 Third Prize: A Promise to Beth: Widower, stepson find bond in loss; *The Clarion-Ledger*; Jackson, MS

Delvyn C. Case, \$3,000 Fourth Prize: 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered!'; *Portland Press Herald*; Portland, ME

Jennifer Berry Hawes, \$2,000 Fifth Prize: Kairos ministry seeks the lost at Lieber prison; *The Post and Courier*; Charleston, SC

Rusty Wright, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Linsanity movie: hoops, hopes, Harvard, heaven; *The Upshur Connection*; Buckhannon, WV

Charles D. Perry, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Yours. Mine. His. A story of faith, family and adoption; *Myrtle Beach Herald*; Myrtle Beach, SC

John Dickerson, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Arizona firefighter families: Is God Punishing Us?; *CNN*; Atlanta, GA

Christina Ryan Claypool, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: An Alzheimer's caregiver's journey: Learning to love unconditionally; *Our Generation's Magazine*; Lima, OH

Kira (Clark) Nelson, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: The spirit of Christmas: North Bend girl Julia Navidi sets and meets big charity gift goal; *Snoqualmie Valley Record*; Snoqualmie, WA

Janet Marie Galyen, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Bringing Lyla Home; *Manchester Times*; Manchester, TN

Paul Kengor, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Defender of Biblical and Natural Law; *The American Spectator*

Doris Mataya, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Muslim Girls Denied Education Rights; *The Roseburg Beacon*; Roseburg, OR

Mark Hendrickson, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: Uncle Sam To America's 'Wise Virgins': Drop Dead; *Forbes*

Henry G. Brinton, \$1,000 Award of Outstanding Merit: "Why gun violence is a Christian issue"; *The Washington Post*

You can read their articles online at www.amyfound.org.

The Amy Writing Awards

include an annual first prize of \$10,000. Second prize is \$5,000, third prize is \$4,000, fourth prize is \$3,000, and fifth prize is \$2,000. Up to 10 more awards for outstanding merit are for \$1,000 each.

The Awards are designed to recognize creative, skillful journalism that applies biblical principles to stories about issues and lives. The goal is for non-Christian readers to see the relevance of biblical truth and for Christian readers to become disciples. Visit: www.worldmag.com/amyawards/.

Winning storytelling tips

By Mary Jackson

Carolyn Kimmel, 51, is the 2013 Amy Writing Awards \$10,000 first prize winner. Her winning article materialized after years of relationship with two missionary doctors and their wives who travel to Africa, but also attend her Dillsburg, Pa. congregation. Kimmel writes a regular health column for her local newspaper. She also looks for freelance opportunities to write feature stories about "the difference Christ can make in a person's life."

Kimmel shared more from her 27 years of journalism experience leading up to her award-winning article in a recent interview:

You traveled to the Africa as part of your research on the missionaries described in your article. What is the value of reporting on site? There's no substitute for tasting, feeling, hearing, and smelling the details surrounding a story. You go to write and all of those senses and feelings come back to mind. It gives tremendous meaning to your topic.

Experiencing the doctor's work first-hand also gave you a good lead. I was struck by a simple thing like removing a peanut from a screaming child's nose with a paper clip can make such a huge impact. It was a vivid demonstration of what a missionary does and how simple medicine can be.

After you returned home from Africa, what was the biggest challenge as you began piecing together a story? I would say narrowing down what I wanted to say to 1,500 to 2,000 words. I had this amazing, life-changing experience and pages and pages of great stories, details, and quotes. I probably spent as much time cutting, if not more, as I did writing.

Find a mentor, someone who will look at your early writing and give you an honest critique.

Did it come as a surprise when the story won the Amy Writing Award? It's funny because about 10 years ago the wife of one of the doctors I wrote about gave me a pamphlet about the awards. I stuck it in a bag and forgot about it. Then after the story came out, a childhood pastor recommended I enter it in a writing contest. I remembered the Amy awards because I also have a daughter named Amy.

It shows how God lays up plans for us years ahead of time.

You met Drs. Thuma and Spurrier through your local congregation. How do you come across stories such as this one? I always have my ears and eyes open in everyday conversation. If you pay attention, people often have a story to

tell. The big joke in my church is that I've written about just about everybody.

Sharing your faith in the mainstream media is tough. How are you able to profess Christ? I don't have a lot of opportunity to write about Christ. I am always looking for someone who will talk about their faith. Often mainstream editors will edit that out, although I've been surprised. Many Christian writers think they have to be preachy. I come at it from a more relational way. I look for stories that show what it looks like to have Christ in your life."

What advice do you give to young writers? Find a mentor, someone who will look at your early writing and give you an honest critique. A reporter at my first newspaper job in Gloucester, Mass., would tell me this lead is too long, or I needed more quotes, or to let my sources tell the story. All of this I filed away and began to do myself. I also encourage young writers to seek out and write about topics they're passionate about.

You may find past issues of *Pen & Sword* online at our website:

www.amyfound.org

Joel Belz is WORLD Magazine's founder. He writes a regular column for the magazine and contributes commentaries for "The World and Everything in It," WORLD's radio program. He is also the author of *Consider These Things*.

"Opinions are a dime a dozen, and easy to produce. Reporting takes hard work. That's why it's worth more to us."—Belz

Amy Writing Awards

Don't miss an opportunity to submit your published work for the 2014 Amy Writing Awards. See <http://www.worldmag.com/amyawards/> for more details.

A veteran journalist's advice to young writers

By Joel Belz

In an era where engineering graduates with a bachelor's degree and no experience are offered salaries of \$50,000 just to show up, it's sobering to have to tell young people who want to work with words that journalism remains a badly paid profession. The reason, which also affects teachers, is simply the law of supply and demand. God seems to have placed in an extraordinary number of people the desire to influence others both through teaching and through the printed page. The compulsion for many is so strong that they tend to ignore the pay factor just to get on with the mission.

While the crowds of those wanting to become teachers might have diminished a bit, would-be writers are everywhere. The lure of having your name in print continues to intoxicate, which means the competition for starting jobs as writers remains keen.

Having watched that phenomenon for a decade or two, I'm ready at last with specific advice for aspiring writers. Learn these rules well, and you'll still die penniless and in obscurity. But at least you might get something into print!

First, learn some important distinctions about categories of writing. Give up on poetry, fiction, and opinion pieces. I'm astonished by young people who think they're prepared to be handed a regular paycheck for writing down their wisdom.

A far better place to begin is with basic news reporting, and I can tell you from experience, it's also more fun. News reporting sharpens your observational powers and your skills in using detail to draw word pictures. Reporting teaches you to listen to how people talk. It deepens your understanding of human nature and throws you into the cauldron of human conflict, grief, disappointment, betrayal, and all the

other complexities of life that go beyond petty personal experiences. Reporting teaches you how big the world is, and how far God's works of creation and providence stretch in every direction.

In short, reporting enriches and matures you. If, someday, you also succeed as a writer of poetry, fiction, and opinion, that success will come in large measure because you honed your skills first as a reporter. Mark Twain spent his early years as a newspaper reporter and typesetter. Another giant among

American writers, Herman Melville, apparently did no newspapering, but he was a reporter nonetheless. Melville richly prepared himself for his writing career by adventuring for four full years on the South Seas. Nobody writes out of a vacuum.

Here at WORLD magazine, if a gaggle of writing candidates were to show up looking for jobs, good reporters always

trump opinion writers. Opinions are a dime a dozen, and easy to produce. Reporting takes hard work. That's why it's worth more to us.

To such advice, let me append this further counsel: Because even good writers sometimes go jobless, it's not a bad idea to learn some other skills. If two people showed up at my office looking for a writing job and offered equally attractive clipbooks with samples of their work, I'd still take the one who said he or she also knew something about marketing, speaking a second language, mastering spreadsheets, or networking computers. All of those are worthwhile skills around a publishing enterprise. Face up to the fact that your writing abilities may not yet, by themselves, land you the job you want. But such skills, plus something else of value, might.

That "something else of value" might even be competency at pushing a broom.

"How do I get started?" they all ask me. "At the bottom," I tend to reply.

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Reporting teaches you how big the world is, and how far God's works of creation and providence stretch in every direction.