

Christmas 2009

# MEMO-Cuba Newsletter



The summer is over, the winds are becoming colder, and the days shorter and soon the stores will be playing Christmas music. That means it's past time to write another report on MEMO-Cuba and the unexpected and often unplanned events that continue to occur. And I do enjoy this opportunity to pause and reflect on all that has transpired in the last few months and simply say "WOW!"



**Cook Engineering container arrives in Havana**

When last I wrote in June, Cook Engineering had just helped us pack and ship a container and that was great news. That container broke all records in arriving at its destination in only three weeks, and went straight through without being opened in Havana while on its way.

Wonderful news also was the obtaining of our MEMO-Cuba warehouse (at last) at 258 Van Horne Street. The building is on property owned by Grace Free Church and is ours to use (as long

as we pay for the utilities) until the land is needed for parking space.



**New MEMO-Cuba warehouse dedication**

What a great help in organizing the logistics of collecting, inventorying and finally shipping the supplies! We didn't always feel patient as we sought and then waited, but we are so thankful! The other thing we acquired was a second storage trailer, which we now have on the same lot.

In August, our x-ray consultant, Erwin Stuka, came from Alberta to direct in dismantling and removing a Fluoroscopy unit from St. Joe's hospital. We not only received the unit, but were paid \$6,000 by the hospital for removing it. We needed that!

In the Spring letter, I told you about an x-ray unit in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, which was available to us for parts for repairs, when necessary, for an identical unit we had in Cuba. How could this possibly be

shipped? Nuna Enterprises, with an office in Thunder Bay, ships heavy mining equipment into Rankin Inlet. They offered to bring the three large and heavy crates to MEMO-Cuba in Thunder Bay. After a trip by barge down Hudson Bay to Churchill Manitoba, and then by truck to Thunder Bay at no cost to us, it arrived to be shipped to Cuba October 16.



**Erwin Stuka dismantling a Fluoroscopy unit**

In September, we were making plans for the shipment of a container in October from Thunder Bay, while at the same time, guiding the people of Sioux Lookout in their shipping of a container to Cuba. Let me tell you about Sioux Lookout!

This is a community of 5,000 people, 350 km northwest of Thunder Bay. It serves a large Aboriginal population, living in remote northern communities. We first went up to meet some of the people there after we learned that

two hospitals (one under the community and the other previously under Indian Affairs) were going to amalgamate into one new state-of-the-art hospital.



*Two old hospitals close down in Sioux Lookout*



We told them about MEMO-Cuba, and wondered if they might have some people who would be interested in sending some equipment to us (or even more). They really got organized as an entire community for the “even more”!

A committee was formed, they discovered their resources and gifting, a local church handled income tax receipts, a container was purchased, and finally filled. A couple of fellows came to help and learn from us about packing. They did their own fund-raising and work themselves, and on October 1<sup>st</sup>, their container was shipped via



*Future home of the new state-of-the-art hospital in Sioux Lookout*

Winnipeg to Havana. They say they consider this a practice run, and are planning to continue on with more!

On October 23, we had a fund-raising dinner with Pastor Iran Pedraza as our speaker. Iran was the Pastor in Cuba who was Jerome’s interpreter on all his trips from the very beginning of MEMO-Cuba. He was at all discussions with government, health officials, and ordinary Cubans. His topic at the dinner was “What MEMO is accomplishing in Cuba from a Cuban point of view”. It was an inspirational evening and seemed to present a challenge to all.



*Pastor Iran interpreting in Cuba*

Donations given enabled us to finish paying for shipping the Oct 16 container, plus another that

went out on October 31.

For all of you, who use the internet, check out our newly designed web page at [www.memocuba.org](http://www.memocuba.org) Even I can follow along and get excited! One person emailed to exclaim “Where did you find the angel who did that?” Steve Bill just said, “Aw, shucks!”



*Astrid Graham in her basement sorting ostomy supplies for Cuba.*

Astrid Graham of Friends of Ostomates of the World supplies MEMO-Cuba with crates of ostomy supplies each year (as we pay for shipping from Ottawa to Thunder Bay). We have just learned that Manitoulin trucking company will allow us two shipments gratis each year – a wonderful saving. Over the last four years we have shipped approximately \$200,000 of ostomy supplies to Cuba. I leave it to your imagination to realize what that means in the lives of many Cuban ostomates.

Just two weeks ago we learned that negotiations to obtain an ultra-sound unit from a not-too-distant hospital had fallen through. A bit of a disappointment, but then we got



a call to say Thunder Bay Medical Centre Diagnostics had a fairly recent ultrasound unit which will be particularly helpful in localizing breast cancer tumors found through our breast screening program, and it's right in Thunder Bay! No wonder I said WOW!

What next?

November 22, a team will go to Cuba. A nurse from the Cancer Centre will be teaching how to insert and care for PICC lines (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter). These are used for people needing long term (up to 1-2 years) of chemotherapy, and are expensive (\$175 each line). In Cuba they won't be used that often, but relieve a lot of pain when needed. Jerome and Steve Neufeld will evaluate the program, assess future needs in discussion with government officials. An engineer will be consulting on maintenance issues and an E.M.S. (Emergency Medical Services) consultant on ambulance services.



*Finger pointing to broken part of Mammography*

When MEMO-Cuba first began, we said we would not simply send “stuff”, but maintain the equipment as far as possible. This involves replacing parts when something breaks down (we located a part to repair a broken mammography unit and are sending it for a cost of \$1,700, but also belts to keep the laundry machines for a cost of \$38).

The people in Cuba realize that this sort of effort requires researching and sending what is needed. It develops a sense of togetherness, and friendships are developed as we work together.

I hope you realize we feel the same about you. Those of you who support us in many ways – encouraging – giving financially to help – telling others and praying. We continue to go on with the expectancy that the “MEMO Miracles” will continue.

May we all enter this Christmas Season with thankful hearts for all the good gifts we have.

Blessings!

Maureen Harvey



**Christmas in Cuba is one of the most joyous occasions in the country and observed with great fun and festivity. Following the declaration of Cuba as an atheist nation in 1962, the festival was removed from list of holidays of Cuban calendar in the year 1969 when Fidel Castro decided it was interfering with the sugar harvest festival. Cuban authorities banned the public display of Christmas trees and nativity scenes, other than in places frequented by tourists, such as hotels. But in 1997, President Castro restored the holiday to honor, in the honor of the visit of Pope John Paul II in**



**MEMO-Cuba**



## GIVE THE GIFT CHRISTMAS!



**\$2** will pay for the x-ray film for a mammogram.  
*(Without mammograms, women die needlessly.)*

**\$10** will buy 15 pairs of sterile surgical gloves.  
*(Without sterile surgical gloves, surgery is impossible.)*

**\$20** will pay for the lab tests necessary to maintain a patient on lifesaving ventilator for a day

**\$50** will pay for replacement belts for a hospital laundry machine. *(Without clean laundry, the operating room cannot function.)*

**\$100** will provide \$1,000 worth of antibiotics.  
*(Without antibiotics, many infections will end in death.)*

**\$200** will pay for a special intravenous line for administering chemotherapy. *(Without these PICC lines, patients suffer with painfully inflamed veins during cancer treatments.)*

**\$500** will pay to ship three comfortable hospital beds and linens. *(Without comfortable beds, hospital stays can be even more miserable.)*

**\$1,700** will pay for a repair part for a mammography machine. *(Without functioning mammography machines, breast screening is impossible.)*

**\$5,000** will pay for second-hand but usable prostate surgery instruments. *(Without prostate surgery, men will eventually die of kidney failure.)*

**\$9,000** will ship an entire container of life-saving medical equipment to Cuba. *(Without shipping, equipment is wasted.)*

**You can designate your gift to go to any of these needs directly**

*(Without your help, it won't get done)*

Please make cheques payable to **EFCCM** and mail to:

MEMO Cuba, 380 N. Court St.,

Thunder Bay ON P7A 4X1

OR

EFCCM, P.O. Box 850, Langley Stn.

LCD1, Langley BC V3A 8S6

*\*\*Enclose a note directing donations to:*

MEMO Cuba #2-5055

Phone: (807) 343-4263

Fax: (807) 344-1902

Website: [www.memocuba.org](http://www.memocuba.org)

Email: [infomemo@tbaytel.net](mailto:infomemo@tbaytel.net)

Official tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more.

To donate by credit card, please call (604) 513-2183.

If you would like to receive future letters by email, please notify us at [infomemo@tbaytel.net](mailto:infomemo@tbaytel.net)

