

# Report on South American Trip

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*Editor's Note:* Mr. Hennessy, a past president of the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association, visited South America last February and March, lecturing on prosthetics and fitting difficult cases. The following article is excerpted from his report on that trip.

The trip to South America was sponsored by the Department of State of the United States Government. Its purpose was to visit hospitals, lecture on prosthetics, and to provide for the prosthetic rehabilitation of Edgar Gonzales by replacements for the hands he lost in a fight with a shark.

The writer arrived in Caracas on February 12, 1961, to meet and examine Edgar Gonzales. Measurements and casts were taken of the patient's stumps and sent by diplomatic pouch to A. J. Hosmer Corporation of Santa Clara, California, for the fabrication of the two prostheses. The United States Embassy at this time arranged a press conference for the writer which was covered by all of the seven Spanish newspapers of Caracas, and by the



**HENNESSY RECEIVES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL**—Charles A. Hennessy, former AOPA President, who recently completed a prosthetics demonstration and lecture tour of several South American countries under a Specialist Grant from the State Department, received the award from General Melvin J. Maas, Chairman of the Committee for the Handicapped. left to right, seated: Dr. Robert E. Stewart of the VA, Winfield S. Smith of the Committee for the Handicapped, General Maas and Mr. Hennessy, and Mrs. Phyllis W. Francis of OVR. Standing: Ralph Storrs, President, and Lester A. Smith, Executive Director, of AOPA.

one English paper. At this time I also visited the "Hospital Ortopedico Infantil" where I met Mr. Harold Jones, C.P., an American prosthetist who has been operating a brace shop at the hospital for the last one and a half years.

On my return later to Caracas to complete the fitting of Edgar Gonzales' prostheses, another press conference was held at the Orthopedic Hospital. Over 100 people, representing a variety of specialties within the medical field, attended this three-hour conference, which was held entirely in Spanish and which was televised. On the day that Gonzales received his prostheses, the English "Daily Journal" carried front page coverage of the event with pictures. On March 18, the "Daily Journal" carried another full picture review which was video-taped. While in Caracas, I visited Dr. Tomas Irsay, an Associate Member of AOPA, who had been a former student of mine at the University of California. He operates an orthotic and prosthetic facility in Caracas and is doing a commendable job.

On February 14 I went to La Paz, Bolivia, to meet with Doctors Adalid Carrasco and Walter Arteaga Cabrera, both of whom specialize in orthopedics. At the hospital "Victor Paz Estenssoro" I conducted a two and a half hour lecture and seminar in prosthetic rehabilitation for physicians, technicians and staff of the hospital. On February 17 another two and a half hour conference and lecture was held at the Rehabilitation Center. On my last day in La Paz I was invited to meet with members of the Bolivian Cabinet. At that time, the principal speaker for the Cabinet members was the "Minister of Work." He emphasized that technical assistance in the fields of orthotics, prosthetics, and rehabilitation is desperately needed and that training in and application of these skills is desired far more than monetary assistance.

My next stop was in Santiago, Chile, where I arrived on February 28. My first consultation was with Dr. Agustine Fricki, the Minister of Health, and Dr. Sebastain Navaez, Consultant to the SNS (National Health Service). We visited and toured all the hospitals in the city, including the two children's hospitals. On March 1 we began a three-day technical conference consisting of instruction, training courses, and lectures for the 12 students attending a prosthetic training course sponsored by the World Health Organization and directed by Eric Jensen, Prosthetic and Orthotic Specialist. In addition to conducting lectures and technical seminars, one of my major projects here was to fabricate a patellar tendon bearing prosthesis for Mrs. Oriano Castro, a patient at the Institute. Press conferences in Santiago produced considerable coverage of events in that city.

Two lectures and seminars were conducted in Valparaiso, Chile, at the Chilean-North American Institute, and a third lecture was given on March 6 during the "Chilena-Norteamericana" week in Vina del Mar. This last lecture consisted of a 45-minute discussion with the general public on rehabilitation.

In Quito, Ecuador, which I reached on March 8, we had a discussion which lasted for several hours on the Mexico City Rehabilitation Center and the proposal to send Latin American students there to receive training in prosthetic rehabilitation. I would be very skeptical of such instruction unless it is well organized, and feel this entire matter, including the educational material, should be thoroughly evaluated. After this conference it was arranged for me to meet with representatives of the "Point 4 Program" to discuss employment of the handicapped to assemble transistor radios, a means of communication and instruction which could prove extremely valuable to the people of this country.



## Major Accomplishments

While on this South American detail, a total of four prostheses were fabricated: 2 below-knee and 2 above-knee prostheses, the latter consisting of an above-knee suction socket and an above-knee congenital.

Publications distributed to key personnel in each of the countries visited included 10 above-knee manuals, 4 below-knee manuals, 6 upper-extremity manuals, 5 copies of the *Orthopaedic Atlas*, Volume I, 8 copies of Volume II of *Artificial Limbs*, 2 hip-disarticulation manuals, and 9 *Orthopedic & Prosthetic Appliance Journals*. In addition four complete sets of technical photographs and slides covering all phases of fabrication were sent to each Rehabilitation Center.

Materials for 2 below-knee prostheses were left with Mr. Erik Jensen in Santiago, and similar material left at the Orthopedic Hospital, Caracas. Two arms were completed for Edgar Gonzales, as well as two APRL mechanical hands and 2 extra cosmetic gloves.

Mr. C. O. Anderson of the San Francisco Prosthetic Services donated approximately \$800 worth of cosmetic hands, gloves, leg build-ups, etc., of which \$200 worth was donated to each of rehabilitation centers or hospitals in La Paz, Santiago, Vina del Mar, and Caracas. Arrangements also were made for Dr. Luisa Romero de Johnston to receive training in the field of physical restoration at the C. O. Anderson Laboratory in San Francisco.

During the trip, a total of eight press conferences were held in Caracas, Quito, Santiago, Vina del Mar, and La Paz. Accounts of my State Department-sponsored activities appeared 39 times in a total of 20 newspapers, all but one of which were written in Spanish. Over 300 people attended the series of lectures and seminars.

The writer's activities were broadcast by radio on six different occasions, and TV coverage was provided on three instances. A total of 48 amputees were examined in the tour, and 44 manuals were distributed. Over 50% of these publications were donated by UCLA, University of California at Berkeley, the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service of the VA in Washington, D. C., and the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association.

In summary, I would like to report that I was graciously received in all of the countries. All of my lectures and seminars were well attended. There is a sincere desire in all of Latin America to implement the establishment of adequate prosthetic and rehabilitation centers. All lectures, seminars and conferences were held in Spanish. I feel that a speaking knowledge of the language of the people in these countries is a definite asset in creating better relationships between the United States and the Latin American countries. Everywhere I was aware of the great hunger and need for technical assistance and instruction in prosthetics and orthotics in the countries visited.

Details of this nature have an immediate public relations appeal, but if cultural and technical exchange are to be at all meaningful, there should be a continued long range program allowing for the teaching, development and application of these basic skills to daily living and the vocational rehabilitation of the peoples of Latin America.

Finally, I cannot close this report without expressing my appreciation of the excellent cooperation I received from all of the embassy officials who were assigned the responsibility of arranging my itinerary and press conferences in the Latin American countries visited. A great deal of credit for the success of this trip is properly theirs.