

## Muchas Gracias

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The massive screening process of needy patients could not have been done without the dedication and hard work of the local volunteers. Caring for the seemingly endless lines of people looking for complex surgical treatment, simple reassurance, or having a question answered was nothing short of humbling. We owe a debt of gratitude to the inspirational people of the small town of El Fuerte for welcoming our LIGA Team.



Hasta La Proxima Vez!

Jonathan M. Davidorf, MD  
March, 2013

El Fuerte, Sinaloa -- Mexico



## El Fuerte, Sinaloa -- Mexico

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Surgical Mission, 2013

## About this book

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In March, 2013, Drs. Bernard and Jonathan Davidorf travelled to El Fuerte, Mexico, as part of a volunteer medical mission organized by LIGA International, "Flying Doctors of Mercy." The team of physicians, surgical technicians, and local student volunteers treated over 200 needy patients with medical and surgical eye disorders. We hope you enjoy this photo essay detailing the mission.





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Surgical Mission, 2013

Since 1934, LIGA International, a philanthropic volunteer organization, has been providing medical, dental, and eye care to impoverished people in rural Mexico. Privately owned airplanes, carrying four to six passengers each, deliver volunteers and supplies to remote LIGA clinics. Hundreds of needy people, both children and adults, are given care that they would not otherwise receive. In Mexico, access to medical care is severely limited for the poor – particularly the rural poor. In fact, the nearest eye doctor to El Fuerte is 50 miles away in the town of Los Mochis – and there are SIX eye doctors at Davidorf Eye Group alone.

Recognizing the significant need for vision health care in El Fuerte, Dr. Richard Villasenor, a retired ophthalmologist from California, and his wife Maria built and equipped a small surgical center and clinic to serve the people in El Fuerte and the surrounding region.

Founded in 1564, El Fuerte is a quaint colonial village in the Sinaloa province, population 30,000, set along the banks of the Rio Fuerte and surrounded by large vegetable farms and orchards. The town does double duty as an alternative departure point for eastbound Copper Canyon visitors and as a tourist destination for sportsmen. The Copper Canyon gained recent notoriety in the book, “Born to Run,” by Christopher McDougall, which detailed the amazing culture of life-long distance running of the region’s indigenous Tarahumara Indians. Unfortunately, Sinaloa is also a ground-zero of sorts for Mexico’s drug war. El Fuerte, specifically, made the news last summer as the site of drug related violence and police killings.





# BORN TO RUN

A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes,  
and the Greatest Race the World  
Has Never Seen

## Christopher McDougall

"McDougall's book reminded me of why I love to run."  
—Bill Rodgers, *San Francisco Chronicle*





Drs. Bernard and Jonathan Davidorf board the very nice four-seat plane of Steve and Cathy Maurer at Whiteman Airport in Pacoima.



It was a beautiful day to fly across Mexico – the rural fields, the Sea of Cortes near Punto Penasco, and, finally, the Rio Fuerte, bordering the town of El Fuerte.



The taxi greeted the four travellers on the airstrip (what service!). Dr. B is seen placing a rock behind the plane's tire to prevent it from rolling while parked.







At Cathy's suggestion, the hungry group enjoyed their Tortas at the appropriately named "Bernardo's."



Well fed, they stretched their legs and strolled around town. The lower right photo is of the town's museum, which details the area's 500 year history.



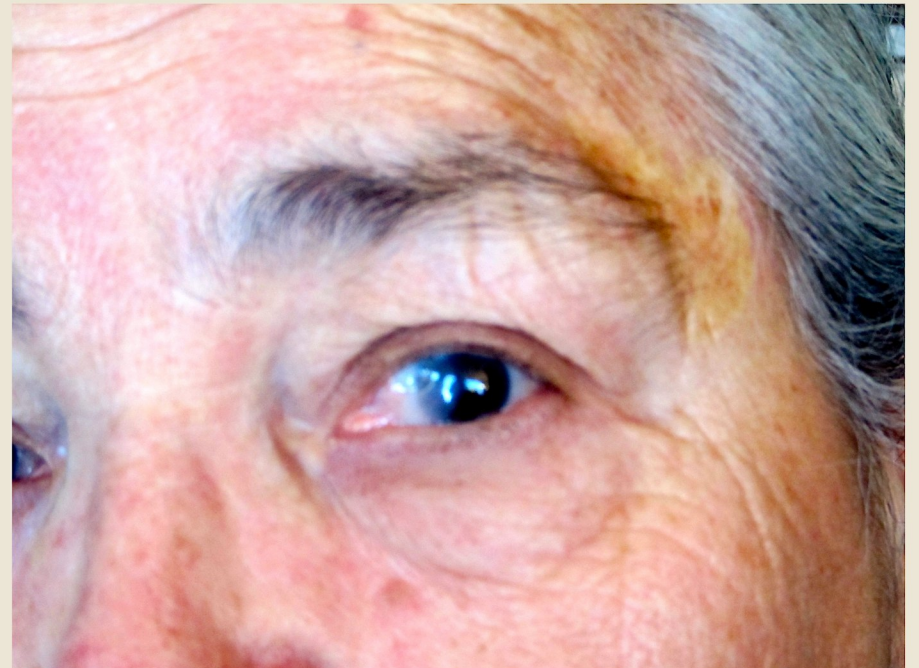
The clinic is short walk from the hotel. The doctors arrived to the clinic at 7:30, with patients lined up, waiting to be evaluated.







Patients were screened outdoors with follow-up information written on post-it notes. When needed, more thorough exams were performed inside the clinic.



There was an overflow of patients with pterygia (growth on the outside of the eye), many rather severe.





Cataract surgery patients waiting to be evaluated, then measured prior to undergoing surgery.





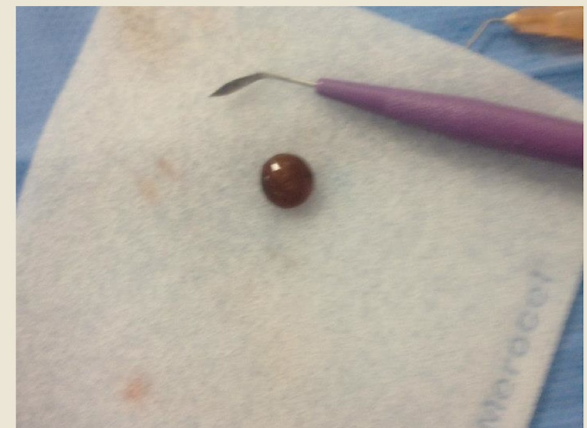
Maria Villasenor, Dr. Bernard Davidorf, Dr. Salz, and staff enjoying a brief lunch.



The surgical technicians and volunteer instrument technicians readying the surgical suite for a busy afternoon of surgery. Three surgeons could operate simultaneously.



Dr. James Salz (Los Angeles, CA), Dr. William Schlichtemeier (Omaha, Nebraska), Dr. Matt Thompson (Green Bay, Wisconsin), and Dr. Jonathan Davidorf (Los Angeles, CA)



The dark brown color of the dense mature cataracts was a common finding.



The pediatric surgical team is able to straighten the eyes of this young boy who was born without one of his eye muscles.



Determining the best course of treatment for this young woman with an eyelid tumor.

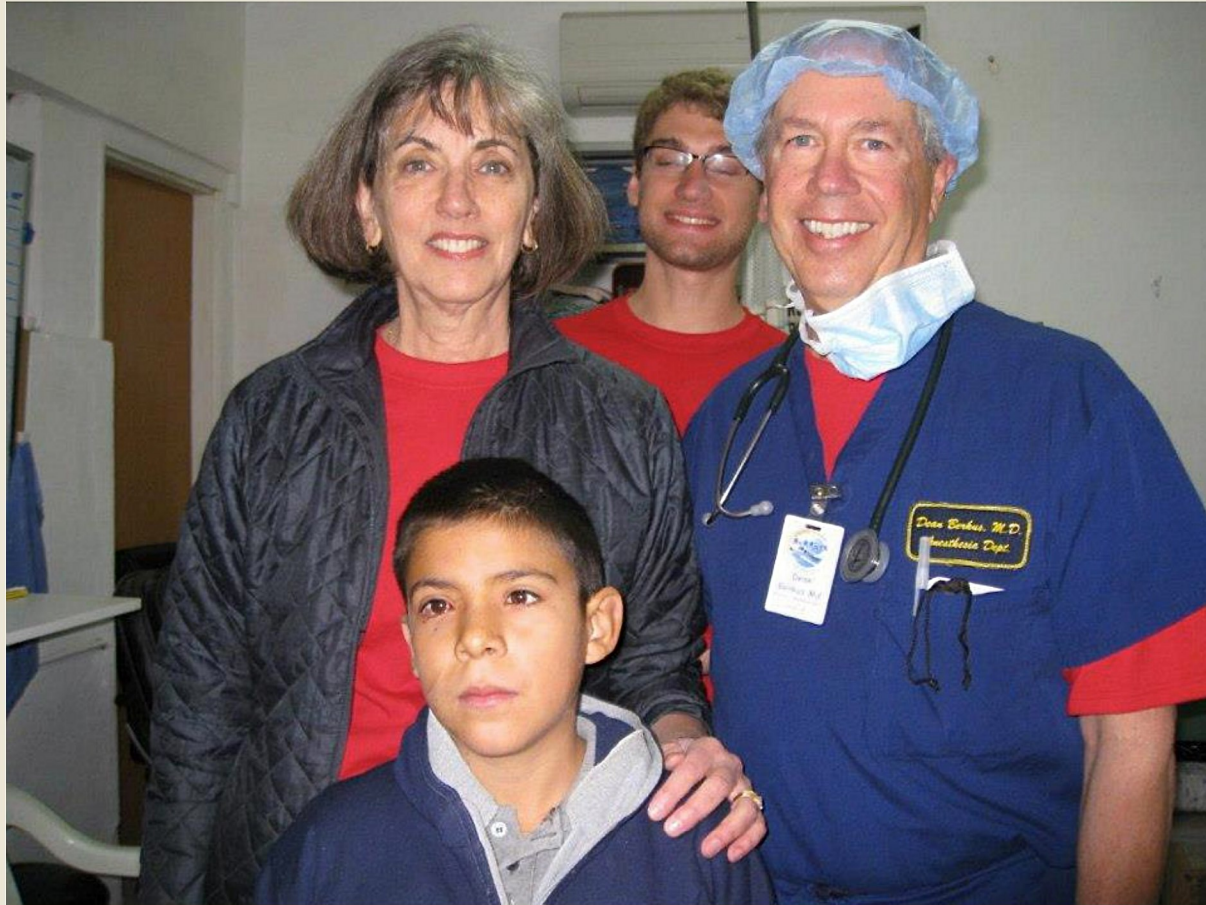




ENT surgeons and podiatrists operated in an adjoining surgical suite.



Super-tech Jazmine and Dr. Villasenor. Happy Birthday, Maria!





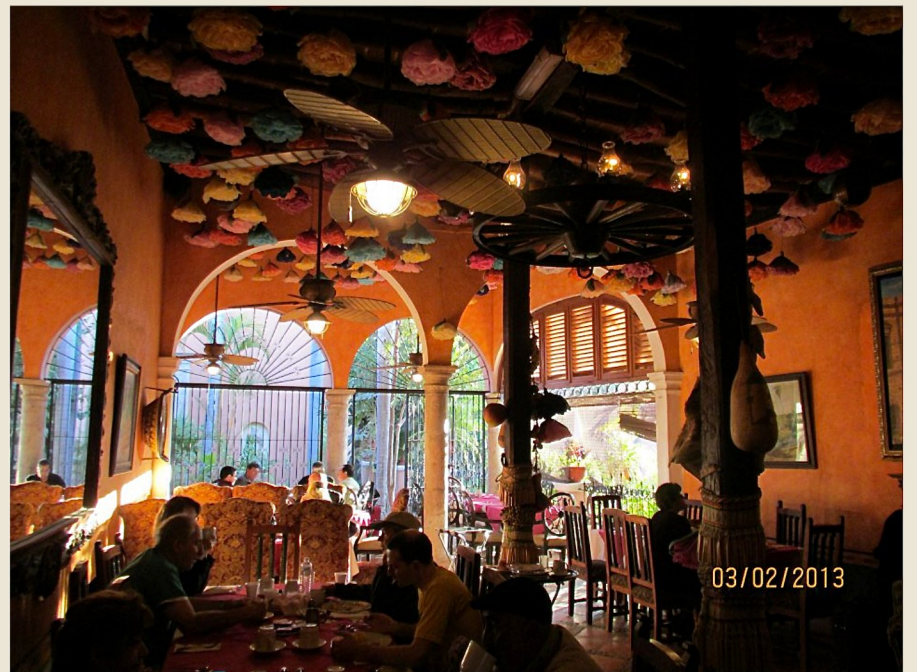
A long day of surgery comes to a close.





Even a surgical team needs to unwind.....





El Fuerte's charming design and artisanship – hotels, the main plaza, the church.







The local student volunteers receive their certificates of achievement, and Maria Villasenor awards a generous scholarship to a volunteer who is beginning medical school.



The whole team.



Leaving El Fuerte, customs at Obregon, and flying over the Sea of Cortez.



Crossing the Tijuana border, we refuel with the F-18s at Brown Field in San Diego.



Back at Whiteman. Well done, El Capitan Steve, our trusted pilot!