



RIDEAU HALL

THE CHANCELLERY OF HONOURS
LA CHANCELLERIE DES DISTINCTIONS HONORIFIQUES

December 7, 2007

Your Worship:

I wish to thank you for accepting to present the Certificates of Commendation awarded by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, on the recommendation of the Canadian Decorations Advisory Committee (Bravery), to Messrs. Michael Gunn, Kris Wiens and Steven Wiens in recognition of their actions following an incident in Northern India, on October 6, 2006.

Since the creation of the Certificate of Commendation, it has been our tradition to request that a prominent official present the document on behalf of the Governor General. The time, place and venue are left to your discretion. I would appreciate it if you could inform our office of the date of the event in order to complete our files.

I have enclosed a fact sheet about the award, as well as information relating to the incident. If, however, you require additional information, please do not hesitate to call Mrs. Patricia Girard, Nominations Researcher (Bravery) at 1-800-465-6890.

Your assistance in recognizing these worthy Canadians is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Denis Poirier
Assistant Director
Decorations, Medals and Awards

Her Worship Sharon Shepherd
Mayor, City of Kelowna
1435 Water Street
Kelowna, British Columbia
V1Y 1J4

Enclosures

DP/pg



Certificate of Commendation

In 1993, the Governor General approved the creation of a Certificate of Commendation to be issued to those who have made a significant contribution by providing assistance to another person in a selfless manner.

The Certificate of Commendation is signed by the Governor General and is intended for eligible candidates whose actions are deemed notable by the Canadian Decorations Advisory Committee. The Commendation is not automatic; eligible candidates are selected through a voting process.

Certificat de Mention d'honneur

Le gouverneur général a approuvé, en 1993, la création d'une mention d'honneur qui sera décernée à ceux et à celles qui ont porté un geste admirable et désintéressé en faveur d'autrui.

La mention d'honneur est signée par le gouverneur général et destinée aux candidats admissibles dont les gestes sont jugés dignes par le Conseil des décorations canadiennes. La mention n'est pas accordée automatiquement à tous les candidats – elle fait l'objet d'un vote.

B.C. missionary to India electrocuted on train**Lena Sin**

CanWest News Service; Vancouver Province

Sunday, October 15, 2006

VANCOUVER - As the train pulled to a full stop, Josh Casorso seized the opportunity to escape the stifling Indian heat.

The Kelowna, B.C., native and his three friends, on their way to a wedding, climbed on top of the train for some fresh air at this brief stop in the Punjab. Other passengers climbed out the windows.

Casorso thought nothing of the other train that was rumbling into the station. Or of the trolley wires that arced above him.

But suddenly, as the train passed by, Casorso was jolted with 45,000 volts of electricity, nearly killing him.

The 20-year-old is now in critical condition at a hospital north of Delhi, says David Goertz, a Kelowna pastor.

Casorso sustained serious burns to 60 per cent of his body, as well as internal injuries.

It's believed the Oct. 6 accident was caused by Casorso's large metal belt buckle, which became a conductor for the electrical charge.

"The three other guys that were with him are pretty traumatized," says Goertz. "All of sudden, their friend was laying on the ground to die."

The next 10 days will be critical as Casorso fights against infection and it's likely he'll need extensive plastic surgery upon his return to B.C.

Casorso had left B.C. in mid-August with a small group from his church on a six-month volunteer mission in India.

The trip was unforgettable from the moment they landed in Delhi, where they were bombarded with frenetic, six-lane traffic, the honking of cars and a constant stream of people.

The poverty was also more than what the young volunteers expected: They encountered homeless children sleeping in train stations, slums that look more like trash dumps and a lady suffering from leprosy.

But the heartbreaking sights galvanized the young group even more to do what they had come for.

After a 13-hour train and jeep ride climbing up huge mountains with rivers running deep below, Casorso arrived with his team on Aug. 17 in Manali to help at an orphanage.

The Kelowna group wanted to build the children a basketball court, teach them soccer and art as well as English and drama.

On their days off, Casorso was known to go exploring around town and shopping with his friend Mike Gunn, who "get suckered into buying anything pretty much," said his friend Alisha Winn.

"He's so energetic, a very dynamic person," says Goertz. "He was on a volunteer aid experience that would allow him to experience another culture."

For the past week, members of the Willow Park Church in Kelowna have been praying for Casorso.

Casorso's father, John, has already flown to be by his son's bedside and his mother is scheduled to leave Vancouver today. There is no word yet on when it will be safe to fly their son home.

The church has also sent a youth worker and Pastor Lawrence East to India to help counsel the traumatized group.

But for now, Goertz says the rest of the church group plan to carry on volunteering and will remain in India until January.

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Vancouver Province

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CLOSE WINDOW

B.C. missionary fighting for his life

Last Updated: Friday, October 13, 2006 | 10:26 AM PT

CBC News

A young Kelowna missionary is in critical condition in a hospital in India after getting a massive electrical shock that left him with serious burns to 60 per cent of his body.

Josh Casorso, 20, and other passengers were standing on top of a train getting some fresh air at a stop in the Punjab a week ago.

When another train passed, the young man was jolted with 45,000 volts of electricity, nearly killing him, says his pastor in Kelowna.

"Because he had a big belt buckle on, somehow the electricity used that as a conductor and he was too close. It wasn't like he touched anything," said Lawrence East.

"He just happened to be standing in the wrong place at the wrong time in a very freak accident."

Casorso remains in an isolation unit. Doctors say the next 12 days are critical in his body's fight against infection.

East says Casorso, who had travelled to India through the church to work at an orphanage, is lucky to be alive following the massive shock.



Josh Casorso had been working at an orphanage in India.
(Willow Park Church)

"Well, most people don't survive. Statistically, the doctors were pretty amazed he actually survived it. That we believe is a miracle."

East says people are coming in to the Willow Park Church in Kelowna to pray for Casorso.

"He's amazing with kids. He just has a passion for life, for people, and for his faith."

East says he'll be leaving this weekend to join the young man's father who is already at his son's bedside.

November 22, 2006

With 2300 Canadian dollars each month, the Dar-UI-Fazl childrens Orphanage manages to feed, cloth, shelter, and educate their 100 children. Yet, before you applaud, thinking all is well with this shoe string budget, consider that the orphanage's maintenance budget stands at "0" dollars. The kids have no activities outside-no hiking, no skiing, no field trips. They have CABIN FEVER. The orphanage is forced to only stick to the basics: food, shelter, water. Things are tight. Mawiteii, the woman in charge of the orphanage and who single handedly started it, tries to make things work, but the lack of funds shows. It was humbling to think that the money I (Ian) made back in Kelowna could have supported the entire orphanage of 100 children.

Mawiteii (Orphanage Director) explains to me her desire to help set up support centers in the villages around Manali. She hopes that these centers will help provide computer, sewing, and typing skills for women living there.

Things are good here. We're getting settled into our jobs. Nathania and Ian are coordinating efforts with the orphanage, and finding the needs. Within an hour with Mawiteii and hearing the needs; we would consider our team's timetable full.

5 team members: Mike, Josie, Amber, Carleen and Wayne, are beginning the under taking of planning and pulling off the christmas production. Right now they are painting and fixing the cracking walls in the girls dorm, along with the dinning hall.

The others will be moving into construction projects, replacing windows, buidling a basketball court and general maintenance. The problem with the orphanage's budget is the lack of funds that are given for maintenance. The funds they are given must be used to buy food.

It's interesting to see that well we could have hired local people to do the job we are doing for the orphanage, Mawiteii often complains about how dishonest the local workers are. The jobs done are done cheaply, cutting corners, maximizing the profits at the expense of the orphanage. we find ourselves spending most of our time replacing these poor jobs.

We'll be spending Christmas here with the kids, staying until late Jan. It made sense considering that the kids get off school Dec 5, and will be moving into their year break. They won't return to school for a few months. This will mean that our team will switch gears somewhat, creating a timetable for these months. We'll be setting up clubs. So far these include: outdoor and trekking, carpentry, arts and crafts, cooking, Bible, book club and others.

We're all really excited to be here in a place where we are badly needed. Our hope is that we can help create a partnership with people back home and this orphanage in Manali- the Dar-UI-Fazl Orphanage.

This truly is an amazing opportunity and a gift from God that we can be here serving him. We are learning so much from Mawiteii, the other 6 main staff and all the beautiful children here- I truly admire them and wish that you could all be here with them for even just a single day.

Josh is also doing well back in Canada. He has now had his final skin graft and could be out of the hospital within a few days! Praise God, the nurses say that he is the fastest healing person that they've seen- no coincidence there!

Thank you for your continued prayers. ----- The 6-month India Team

The unfinished story of Josh Casorso

His life took a sharp turn after an accident in India

Teresa Klassen



Josh Casorso in the hospital

Josh is a young man: just 19 years old. On good days, he's an optimist, rallying the team, pointing the way to adventure. That's how he was last October 7.

He was in India on a six-month mission trip with MBMS International, with a team from Willow Park Church, Kelowna, B.C., dividing his time between working in an orphanage, taking language school, and building relationships.

The team was a few months into the routine of living in another country and Josh was comfortable with his surroundings, including the monkeys and rickshaws, attending Indian festivals, and mucking through the streets in monsoon season.

An invitation came: Josh and three friends were asked to attend a wedding. This would require an overnight train ride. The boys jumped at the opportunity, finding their way to the train station, and heading towards what Josh's father, John Casorso, would later describe as a "really sharp turn."

At one of the train's stops, Josh spotted a parked train next to theirs and asked a friend to take his picture. A ladder on the side of the train beckoned; it was the perfect Kodak moment.

Josh ascended a few rungs and his friend snapped a picture. Then Josh lost consciousness.

Critical condition

Friends told him later that he'd climbed a little higher and as overhead electrical cables arched towards his metal belt buckle, he was blasted off the train onto the pavement, landing head first and on fire. Two friends tore off Josh's shirt, another ran to stop the now moving train, and the three of them hauled Josh aboard. Not knowing exactly where they were going, they travelled to two different hospitals before they found the Christian medical college in Ludhiana that could treat him.

All this time Josh was in critical condition. He had suffered severe electrical burns to 60 percent of his body (from the neck down) and spinal injury. The friends almost lost him a few times but never left his side, using all the money they had to get him help before monies from insurance, church, and community would arrive.

In the middle of the chaos, there were miracles. The medical team bandaged Josh exactly as they should as he conquered excruciating pain with minimal pain medication. In other beds, people perished. The hospital extended grace and treated Josh, not knowing (even when he was evacuated) whether they would be paid. Josh's father arrived in India a few days later and, he said, it seemed people showed up "out of the woodwork" to care for the family and provide assistance. When things seemed gloomy, someone came to pray with Josh and sing in his room.

Evacuation, endurance

On Diwali (Festival of Lights), India's biggest party night, Josh was evacuated by ambulance. They drove towards New Delhi amid rockets and fireworks and thousands of people celebrating in the streets.

Forty hours later Josh arrived by commercial jet in Vancouver, B.C. to endure two months of treatment and skin grafting. He's home now, and at this story's writing, was waiting to fly to Chicago for assessment in an electrical burn centre regarding possible internal injuries.

Josh describes his current routine quietly. Mornings, he gets up, bathes, puts cream on, and stretches; he always has to

stretch to keep himself from "tightening up in a ball."

In the early days of his injury his task involved physical endurance: getting through the day, getting through the night. Now a different kind of endurance is involved: getting through days filled with emotional uncertainty and darker nights of discouragement.

When I asked Josh what those in his wider family of MB churches could pray for him, he said, "I don't know." He has many scars to deal with and many of his steps now lead into medical offices.

John Casorso says this is a story that's not finished. Miracle after miracle has brought them home, but "what did this all mean and what lies ahead?" are questions that linger.

"When you lose all ability to have control over something, the only option is to lean on the Lord," he says. "That is all there is. That is all that matters."

Teresa Klassen attends SunRidge Community Church, Kelowna, B.C.

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