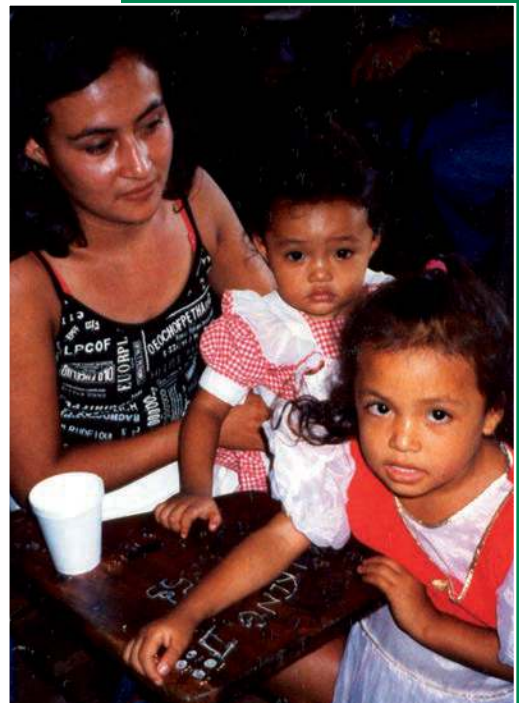
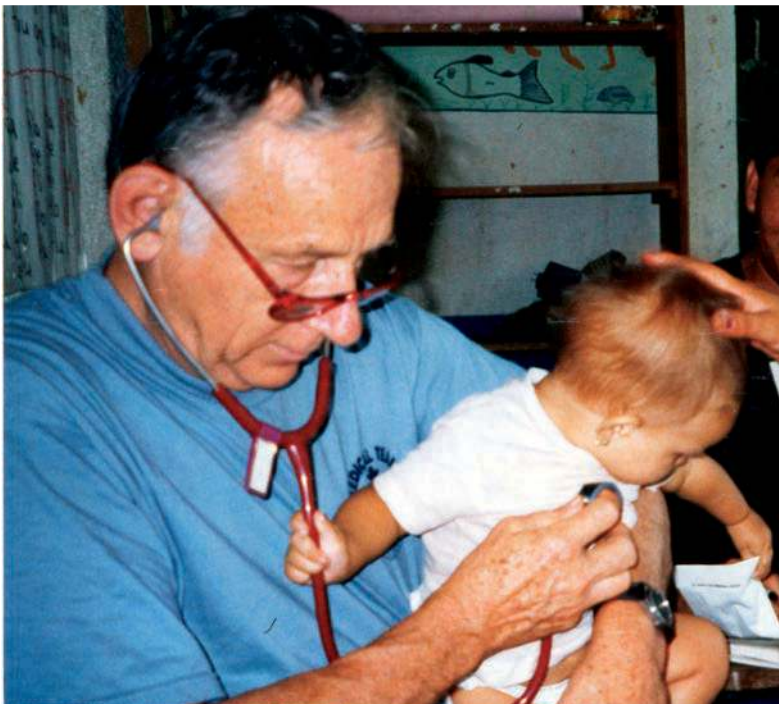


Is there magic in tropical rain?

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I'm in the mountains of Nicaragua. They grow coffee here and spawn poverty. We are in a village school, our hearty band of doctors and nurses. The people form long lines to see us; we'll have trouble seeing them all today. Complaints are ordinary: backaches, stomach pain, and coughs. But there are exceptions. The six-year-old girl walked toward me, she squatted; I could almost hear the murmur across the room. I mention an operation, but the parents turn their heads and frown. "She's too little," they say, and I swallow a tear.

That same day I saw the boy of four whose foot was clubbed. "Oh, yes," I hear, "They could fix the foot in Managua, but there's no money to get there." I pass the hat among my colleagues and he goes. While waiting for who's next, I look out the window. The line is long, the sky is darkening, the air grows cool and smells wet. Suddenly, a torrent of tropical rain pours down. The line doesn't move, they'd lose their places. There must be magic in the rain.



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