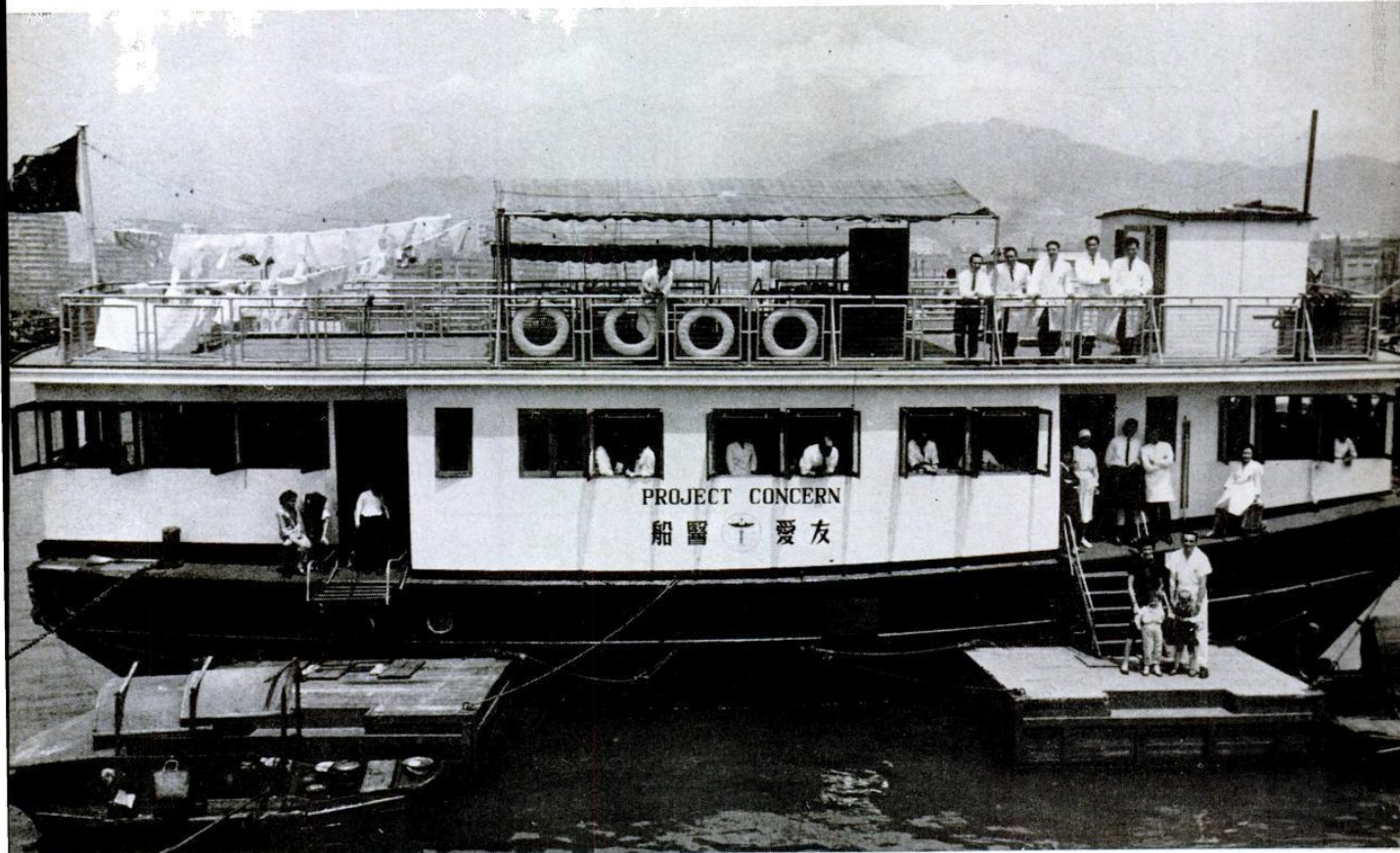


# DOCTOR AFLOAT: HONG KONG

*Modern medicine has come to the people of the sampans  
in the form of Project Concern's water-borne clinic.*

**Photos and Text by A. E. Woolley**





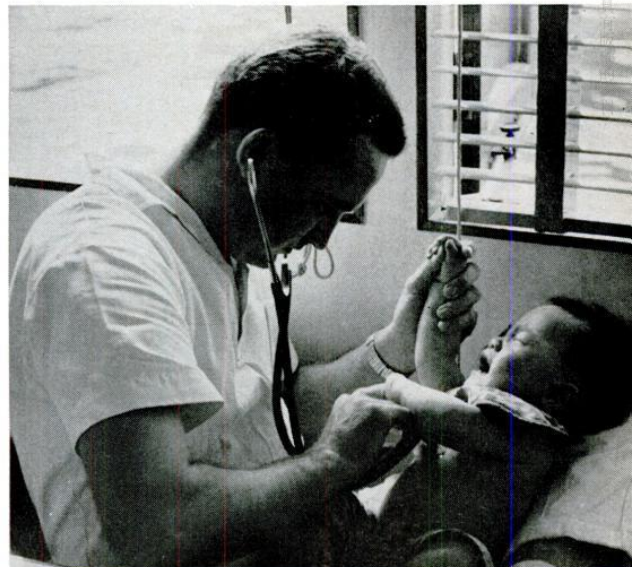
Patients begin arriving at the clinic just after dawn in boats sculled by anxious family members. . . . The doctor's cases (below) range from squirming babies to grandmothers a bit fearful of Western medicine to shiny-eyed little girls like this one with her first doll, a gift through Project Concern from a U. S. firm. Clinic patients number 300 a day.

**“WE ARE AWAKENED** each morning by the sprinkle of coins falling on the deck. But we don't mind. It is a pleasant alarm.” Martha Turpin flashed a warm smile. “You see, out here we have been accepted and the awakening each morning indicates that the people want what we have to offer.”

The offering is Project Concern, a unique health and medical program founded by Dr. and Mrs. James W. Turpin and centered about a floating clinic in Yaumati sampan shelter, Hong Kong Harbor. Supported by friends from many countries, but not by any political, governmental, or religious organization, the clinic charges nominal fees and for a year also served as home for the Turpins and for their four children.

Project Concern got its start in an indirect manner. The Turpins were comfortably settled in southern California, where Jim had a successful general medical practice. The family had the usual American necessities and luxuries. But Jim Turpin wanted more out of medicine than material gains. He had trained for missionary work and is an ordained Methodist minister. Several years ago Martha and Jim began visiting Tijuana, Mexico, where they treated poor people. Week-ends and, later, vacations were devoted to the visits. And Jim Turpin found in this work the satisfaction which

*This junk (left) and a duplicate given by the Rotary Club of Kowloon West house all the facilities of Project Concern's floating clinic—including dental, X-ray, pharmacy, and examination rooms, plus lodging for the director and his family—in this case the Dr. Turpins and their children (front right).*





Some 500 children a morning are fed milk, vitamins, and cookies from the lower deck of Ming Ling (in Chinese, "Thou Shalt Live"), the clinic boat donated by the Rotary Club of Kowloon West, Hong Kong. Sometimes this is the only food a child will receive in a day. . . . Dr. Turpin (right) and a tiny patient afloat!

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had been missing in his regular practice. He resolved, and Martha agreed without hesitation, that he should practice his medical skills wherever they were most needed.

After a six-month search, and after a trip to the Far East, the Turpins arrived in Hong Kong with little more than hope, conviction, determination, and the help of several friends. To this date much of the money invested in the idea, in addition to \$20,000 from friends and former patients, has come from the Turpins' own bank account.

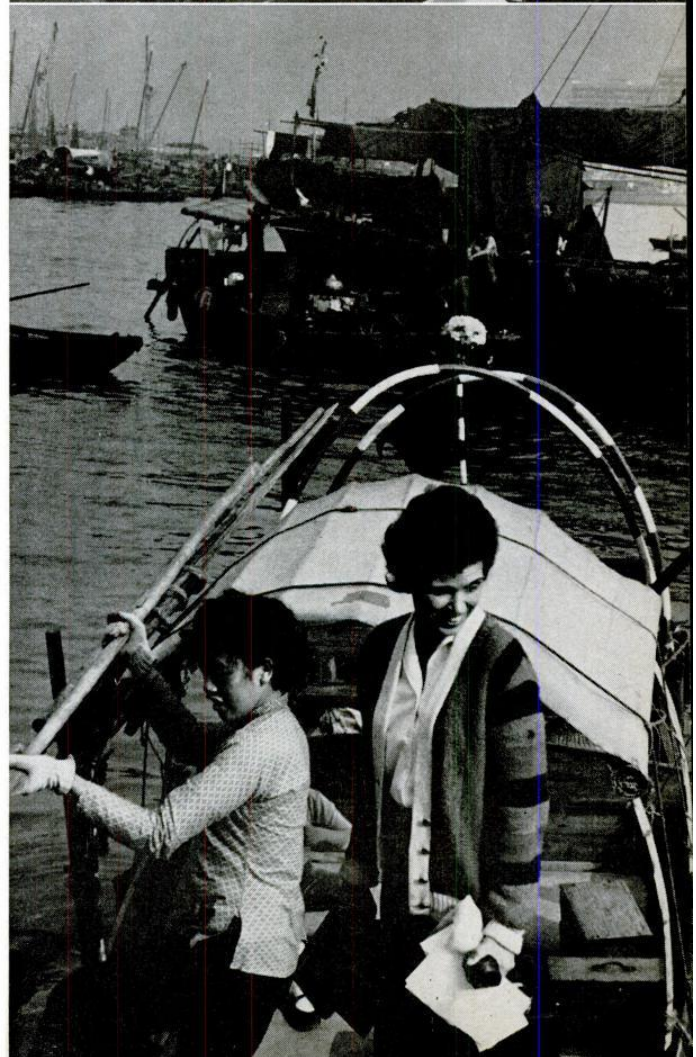
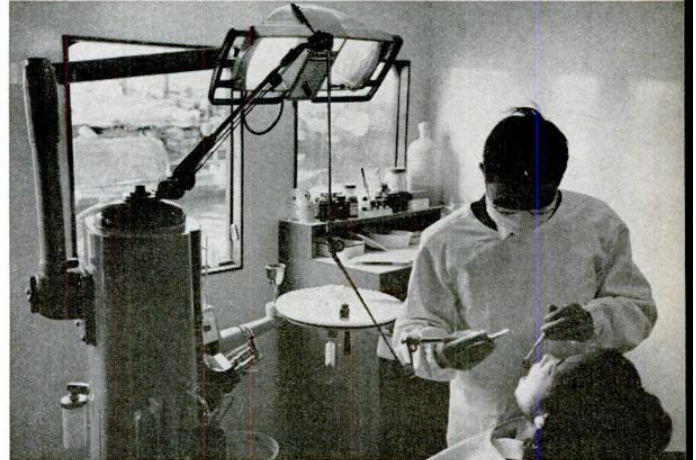
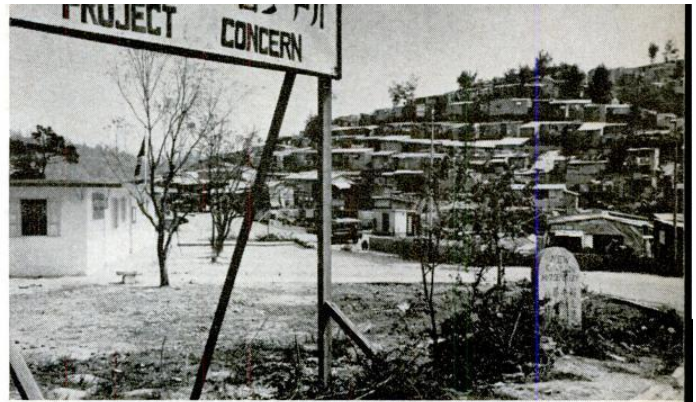
A large converted junk was bought, and prepared for a floating clinic. At first the Turpins lived on shore and "commuted" by sampan to the clinic, with Dr. Jim making "house calls" along the way as he sculled between the houseboats which are the only homes of thousands of Hong Kong "water people." Eventually he was greeted with shouts of *Kai Yeh!* (godfather).

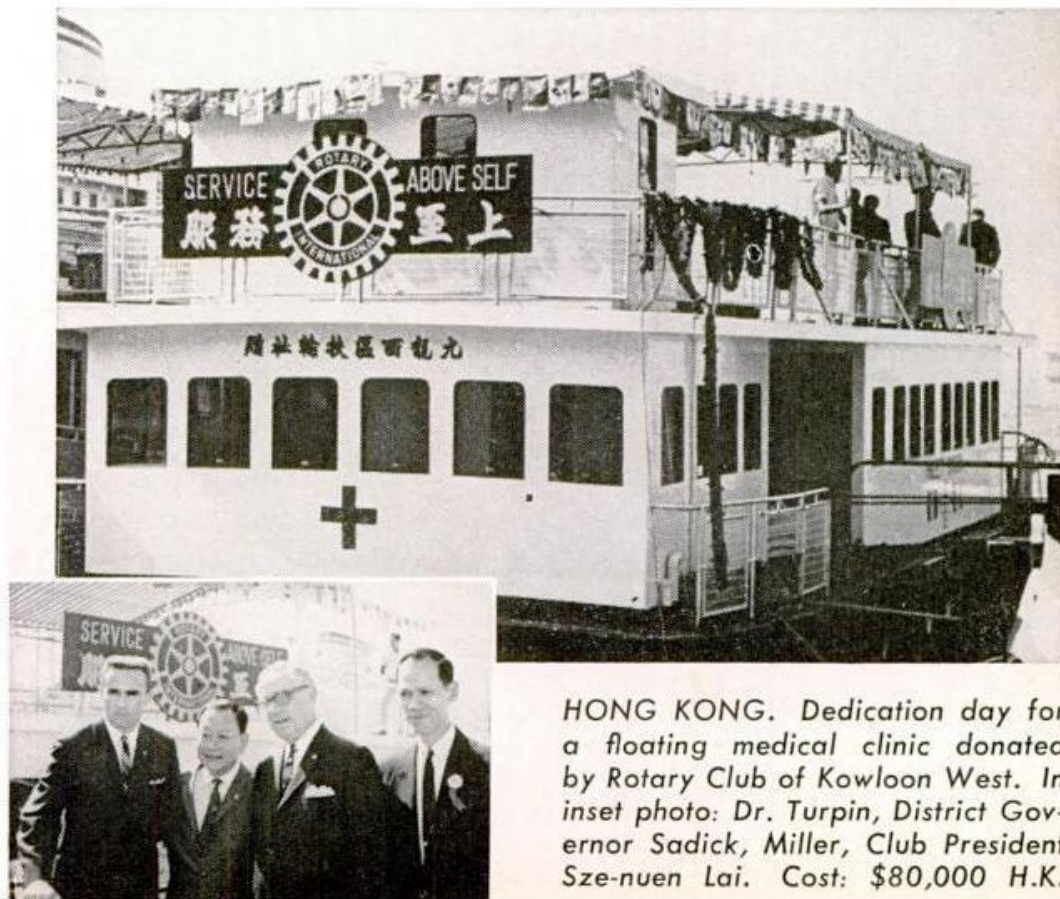
When the Rotary Club of Kowloon West gave Jim a second boat, identical to the first and equipped with dental and X-ray machinery, there was enough room for the family to establish a comfortable home on the lower deck of the *first* boat. In addition to the monumental boat gift, worth \$60,000 (HK), or \$10,500 (U.S.A.), Rotary support has come from Switzerland's District 179, which spent \$1,500 at wholesale rates for a gift of drugs for the clinic.

Expanding his medical services, Jim soon set up a one-room clinic in the vice-, dirt-, and disease-infected Walled City of Kowloon, and a small clinic in a refugee camp. He added personnel, until today the total Hong Kong staff contains 14 doctors, five nurses, three technicians, and 23 helpers. Diseases most often treated are tuberculosis, parasitic infections, trachoma, bronchitis, iron-deficiency anemia, and opium addiction, and much stress is laid upon educating the people in preventive medicine. Prenatal visits for expectant mothers result in healthier babies; opportunity to learn about birth-control methods is provided in meetings instructed by a clinic member.

Today the Hong Kong program continues to thrive, with Dr. Robert Reaburn, his nurse wife, and their five children occupying the Turpins' former floating home. While still directing the over-all activities of a growing Project Concern, Dr. Turpin is in Vietnam (see next page) establishing another dramatic program of medical help. And except for the Summers, when she and the children can be with Dr. Turpin part of the time, Martha Turpin is in California embarked on a period of college study intended to win her an M.D. degree in 1970. Then, on some far and remote medical frontier, two Dr. Turpins side by side will fight disease.

*One of two land-based Project Concern clinics (top) is located in a refugee camp built in a cemetery. Here 500 children a day are fed and 100 patients are examined. . . . On the boat donated by Kowloon West Rotarians, three dentists work with modern equipment. . . . Martha Turpin is a strong assisting arm to Dr. Turpin. Now she is in the U. S. studying to become a doctor.*





HONG KONG. Dedication day for a floating medical clinic donated by Rotary Club of Kowloon West. In inset photo: Dr. Turpin, District Governor Sadick, Miller, Club President Sze-nuen Lai. Cost: \$80,000 H.K.

## Glossary

- (1) Miller = Carl P. Miller (Los Angeles Rotary Club), Rotary International President 1963-1964
- (2) District Governor Sadick  
 “Dick” Omar R. Sadick (Kowloon Rotary Club), Rotary International District 345 Governor 1963-1964 林世德(九龍扶輪社), 國際扶輪 345 地區 1963-1964 年度總監
- (3) Sze-nuen Lai  
 Lai Sze-Nuen, President 1963-1964 Kowloon West Rotary Club 黎時煖, 九龍西區扶輪社 1963-1964 年度社長
- (4) Project Concern Hong Kong = 香港醫藥援助會
- (5) Dr. James W. Turpin = 丘平醫生  
 James Wesley Turpin (born on 18 December 1927) is an American physician and Methodist missionary. He is the founder and director of Project Concern International (PCI) and an activist against the impact of war and poverty on young people in Asia.

Turpin was raised in eastern Kentucky in Ashland, United States. In 1960 he began a lifelong activism for those suffering from lack of medical care and impoverished living conditions notably in Hong Kong, Vietnam, and Appalachia, through Project Concern International and gained respect from those he helped and recognition from service oriented institutions for it. Conflict over medical advice his family was personally given gave rise to a new field of tort law called wrongful life. He currently lives in western North Carolina and continues his activism. Dr. James W. Turpin, the founder of Project Concern, learnt the desperate need for medical service from the influx of Chinese refugees in the late 1950's and early 1960's. He started his medical service in the British Crown Colony Hong Kong in 1961 and "Project Concern International" was found. The first medical clinic was begun operation in the Walled City in 1962.

In 1970's, a dental clinic was opened in Tsz Wan Shan and a general clinic in Sau Mau Ping. In late 1970's, the innovative mode of dental service --- mobile dental service was launched out. In 1980's, dental clinics were established in Yuen Long, Hing Man Estate in Chai Wan, Shuen Wan of Tai Po, Pak Tin, Choi Wan and Lei Cheng Uk in Kowloon, respectively. In 1985, Project Concern was registered as a non-profit charitable organization and named as Project Concern Hong Kong. The dental clinics and mobile dental buses were approved as "designated clinic" to provide dental service to the recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme of Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Government.

The Mobile Eye Service was launched in 1992 in collaboration with the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, aimed to provide accessible and affordable eye service to the public.

From 1998 to 2005, a fitness service was provided in Tsz Wan Shan to promote healthy lifestyle by operating a fitness centre and organizing exercises classes.

During 2001 and 2007, some dental clinics have been renovated to meet the demand of the community. The Dental Clinic in Tung Chung was also operated. The third mobile dental service was launched in 2011 with the sponsorship of S. K. Yee Medical Foundation.

上世纪 50 年代末至 60 年代初，大量難民由中國大陸湧入香港。當時大部人生活在衛生狀況偏低的環境。丘平醫生得悉英國殖民地香港的急切醫療需要後，便來到香港參與醫療工作。繼而於 1961 年創立「國際醫藥援助會」，並於 1962 年在九龍城寨開設首間診所。

1970 年在秀茂坪和牛頭角開設西醫診所，1979 年流動牙科診療車開始提供服務。在 80 年代開始，分別在元朗、柴灣興民邨、大埔船灣、白田、彩雲邨、李鄭屋，設立牙科診所；拓展流動牙科服務，建造兩部牙科診療車。在 1985 年正式註冊為香港非牟利慈善團體，定名「香港醫藥援助會」。在 90 年代該會以拓展全人健康為目標，首先獲得香港政府社會福利署批准成為公共援助計劃受惠人的「指定牙科診所」。1992 至 2005 年與香港中文大學眼科及視覺科學學系合辦流動眼科服務，為普羅大眾提供眼科檢查的街症診療。1998 至 2005 年在慈雲山(南)社區中心開辦康體服務，推廣健康生活概念，及提倡恆常運動的重要性。2000 年至 2007 年期間，先後翻新兩部流動牙科診療車，及一部流動眼科診療車；在天水圍天悅邨開設新診所取代元朗之診所，而在東涌逸東邨內亦設立新診所為居民提供牙科服務。2011 年獲捐贈第三部流動牙科診療車。

This article was edited by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian) on 1 July 2015.