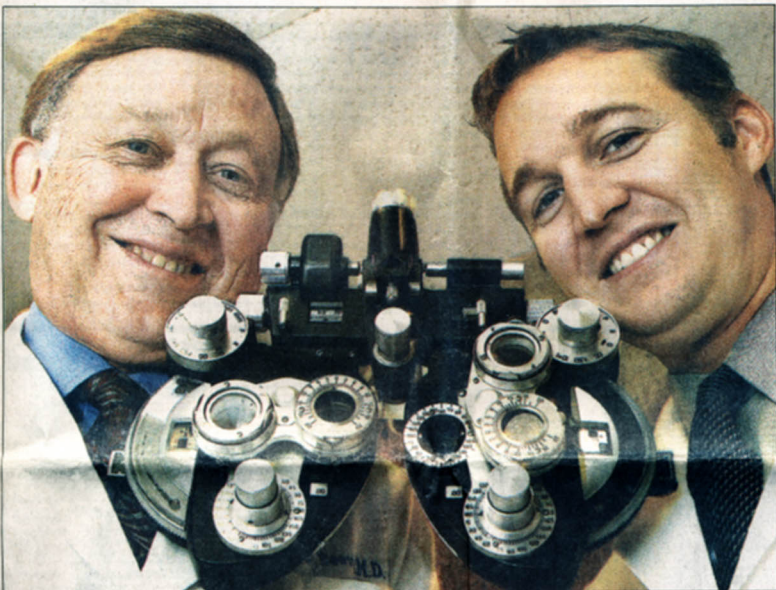


'Resurrected from the dead — that's the way I feel. It's a wonderful feeling.'

— Dr. Jerold Beeve



Staff photo by WALT MANCINI

DR. JEROLD BEEVE, 66, an ophthalmologist from La Cañada Flintridge, and his son, **Scott Beeve**, 34, lead trips to Fiji every year to treat eye problems among local islanders. Their practice, Beeve Vision Center, is in Glendale.

They have Fijians looking good

By Sonya Gels, STAFF WRITER

LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE — On the second day of a 25th wedding anniversary trip to Fiji, Dr. Jerold Beeve gave a hotel worker his reading glasses and inadvertently changed both their lives.

Beeve, an ophthalmologist, could tell the older man had trouble seeing, he recalled. He was gratified by the Fijian's joy at clearly seeing his own hand for the first time in years.

But the next time Beeve saw the man, the glasses were gone.

"I asked him, 'Did you lose the glasses

A couple, their son and a team of doctors travel to the islands yearly to fit people with glasses and perform needed eye surgeries.

already?" And he said no, he gave them to a friend."

Beeve and his wife, Dorothy, found that no one who lived near their resort had glasses. There were no local eye doctors — only desperate need.

On a trip to a nearby island, "we

noticed there was no electricity, no running water," Dorothy Beeve said. "There were people sitting in the corner and not able to see."

The gift of reading glasses soon sparked a crusade.

Since their 1989 trip, the Beeves have been back to Fiji 14 times, bringing doctors and medical equipment with them each trip.

Jerold Beeve and his team have treated 16,344 people, handed out 13,081 pairs of glasses and performed more than 1,200 surgeries.

Now they go for two weeks every year, bringing everything they need to

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Mission costs \$80,000 yearly

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evaluate patients, perform cataract surgery and corneal transplants, fix crossed eyes and remove cancerous growths.

Beeve, 66, is a fast talker, a storyteller. His sentences pick up speed and turn into torrents of enthusiasm.

"This young man walked with his head down," he said recently in his office, pointing at a "before" photo of a Fijian with a severely crossed eye.

"Look at this" — he pointed at the "after" picture. "Look how his head is up. Look at that smile."

The Beeves' son, an ophthalmologist who shares his father's practice, has made the trip several times. So have their office staff, friends and colleagues. Last February, the medical team included 22 doctors and technicians.

"When they get an idea in their head, they want things to work," said Dr. Scott Beeve, 34, Jerold Beeve's son. "They do it. Especially my mother. They've always been that way."

On a typical 10-day trip, the team works 12 to 16 hours per day. Patients line up by the hundreds, days in advance.

"You don't say, it's five o'clock, you guys have to go



A FIJIAN TRANSLATOR, left, and Dorothy Beeve watch as Dr. Jerold Beeve treats a woman with cataracts during a medical mission to Fiji.

home, I've got to get to the beach," Jerold Beeve said. "You don't do that."

Although most resources are donated — all the doctors' time, the airline freight to bring over the equipment, room and board at the Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort on Fiji, medical supplies — transportation and other costs still total \$80,000 per year.

That means doing fund-raising throughout the year. The family enterprise is now a non-profit called the Beeve Foundation, with its own board and director.

Dorothy Beeve, a registered nurse, coordinates the mountain of logistics involved in transporting equipment, and housing and

feeding staff and patients.

"I used to play a lot of tennis. I played golf, bridge games," said Dorothy Beeve, 62. "I really don't have time for myself anymore."

"The good you do is to get a person from being totally dependent to taking care of themselves," Jerold Beeve said. "In places without refrigeration, the fishermen eat first. If you're dependent, you're the last to eat. A lot of (our patients) are underweight."

"You see them, sitting in the corner, they get depressed like anybody else. (Having vision restored is) like being resurrected from the dead."

The Beeves had been looking for a way to help other people in the late 1980s. After years

building a successful practice, they'd traveled to Kenya and researched ways to bring eye care there.

But Africa was too far to go. Many European doctors were already there to help. And they worried about the risk of AIDS. So they reluctantly abandoned the idea.

Although the Fiji trip was supposed to be a vacation, they immediately realized it was the opportunity to help they were looking for.

Dorothy Beeve started working on the proprietor of their resort to rent them a room at half price when they came back. On the first few medical trips, Jerold Beeve and the other doctors treated patients in their hotel bedroom.

Their goal for the next seven years is to double the number of patients they treat, from an average of 1,000 per year to an average of 2,000 per year.

"As long as the Big Guy keeps opening doors for me to go there, I'm going to go walk through them," Jerold Beeve said.

"You feel totally successful being able to provide vision to people who were never going to have it. ... (The patients) are out there, singing songs while they wait. You ought to hear the hymns, in harmony."

"Resurrected from the dead — that's the way I feel. It's a wonderful feeling."

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