

## **Dr. Gayle Cheatwood Biography**

Dr. Gayle Cheatwood, DDS, is a 1975 cum laude graduate of Creighton University Dental School. He has been a member of the Christian Dental Society (CDS) since the early 1990s, serving as a Past-President, a Board Member for twelve years, and on the Advisory Board between terms. In 2011, he and his wife, Nita, received the CDS Lifetime Mission Service Award.

Dr. Gayle is the Founder and President of “Dental Vision Mission,” a non-profit organization encouraging the involvement of others in helping the underserved in developing countries with dental, medical, and vision missions. He is also the President of “Barnabas,” a mission agency serving churches, pastors, and families along the Mexican border. He is a member of two national honor societies: Alpha Sigma Nu and Omicron Kappa Upsilon.

Dr. Gayle started serving on mission trips in 1974 while in dental school, and he has participated on over 140 dental trips. In 1983, Gayle and his wife, Nita, began an eighteen-year pattern of going to Mexico and the prison island of Islas Marias about four times a year. They also went to many other countries, some multiple times: Brazil, Peru, Belize, Colombia, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Tuva, India, Sri Lanka, Tibetan borderland, Central African Republic, Uganda, Djibouti, Haiti, Viet Nam, Nepal, and the Philippines.

Dr. Gayle developed a light-weight, corrugated plastic, dental chair which is used by the Christian Dental Society and many others. His chair design protects the neck and back of dental professionals from the awkward positions Dr. Gayle had originally used while performing dentistry with patients sitting on stumps, chairs, and tables. Dr. Gayle also developed a light-weight dental operating unit that runs off a 12-volt battery that can be recharged with solar cells, enabling dentistry to be performed in austere environments.

Dr. Gayle has been married 47 years to Nita, who assists him on mission trips. They have four children and thirteen grandchildren. As they pass on their hearts of serving the Lord to their extended family, they say, “Missions are fun, enjoyable, and rewarding. You can’t out-give God.”

## **Gayle Cheatwood's Biography in His Own Words**

I was born and raised in Brawley, California, a border town in the Imperial Valley. My dad had an ice plant, which I worked at intermittently from age 14 until I graduated from Dental School. It was there that I learned how to tinker and make things in the shop during my spare time. While in high school, I was exposed to missions and started going on trips into Mexico with missionaries.

I attended Master's College in Santa Clarita and later Cal Poly, graduating with a BS in 1971. I was accepted into the Creighton Boyne School of Dental Science and graduated Cum Laude in 1975. While in Dental School, I spent the summer between my junior and senior year in the Central African Republic doing dentistry in a two-chair clinic in Bangui with Baptist Mid-Missions. We did outreach clinics but could only do extractions for the lack of portable equipment. Later while on a mission trip to Brazil in a jungle village, I realized something needed to be done so we could do more than extractions where there was no running water or electricity. Since that time I have been trying different ways of using 12-volt compressors and vacuums powered by solar panels. I have some prototypes still being used in Brazil, and lately have improved on the design with the help of a firefighter friend.

I had to have surgery on my neck due to the awkward positions I put myself into doing missions with people sitting on stumps, chairs and tables. That's when I started figuring out a light-weight, portable dental chair. I saw our local farmers using corrugated plastic to pick asparagus. I made a scale model of what I wanted out of a manila folder and went to a local box-making company that made the asparagus boxes. I paid for the dyes and had a run of 75 made, gave the selling rights to the Christian Dental Society, with the intention that the profit would be used to help dental students on their first mission trip. Since then, the design has been improved by adding a table, a waste container, and stools. We are now on our third run of these chairs and accessories.

Since 1974, I have averaged four mission trips a year in over 30 countries. For 18 years we went to the prison island of Islas Marias, 100 miles south of Mazatlán in the Pacific Ocean. There were 600-800 children on the island, and we gave them each a love lift bag every Christmas, along with caring for the families' dental, vision and medical needs.

In the late 1990s, we started doing eye glasses and medical work. We would take 800-1000 pairs of eyeglasses on each trip and dispense them. On our last trip to Oaxaca we dispensed 1400 pair. In 2008, I started a 501c3 non-profit called "Dental Vision Mission," of which I am the President and CEO. It has provided more opportunities and has involved more people in missions. God has blessed our ministry, and He gets all the glory.

I am the President of the Board of "Barnabas," a mission agency serving churches, pastors and families along the border from Tijuana, Mexicali, to the Algodones, San Luis area. I am a Past-President, a 12-year Board Member , and currently on the Advisory Council of the Christian Dental Society. I am a member of Alpha Sigma Nu and Omicron Kappa Upsilon, two national honor societies.

I have been married 47 years to Nita who goes and assists on the trips. She keeps me organized and on track. We have four children and thirteen grandchildren. I have taken my children on mission trips and now my goal is to include all of my grandkids on a mission trip. The four older ones have gone, some multiple times.