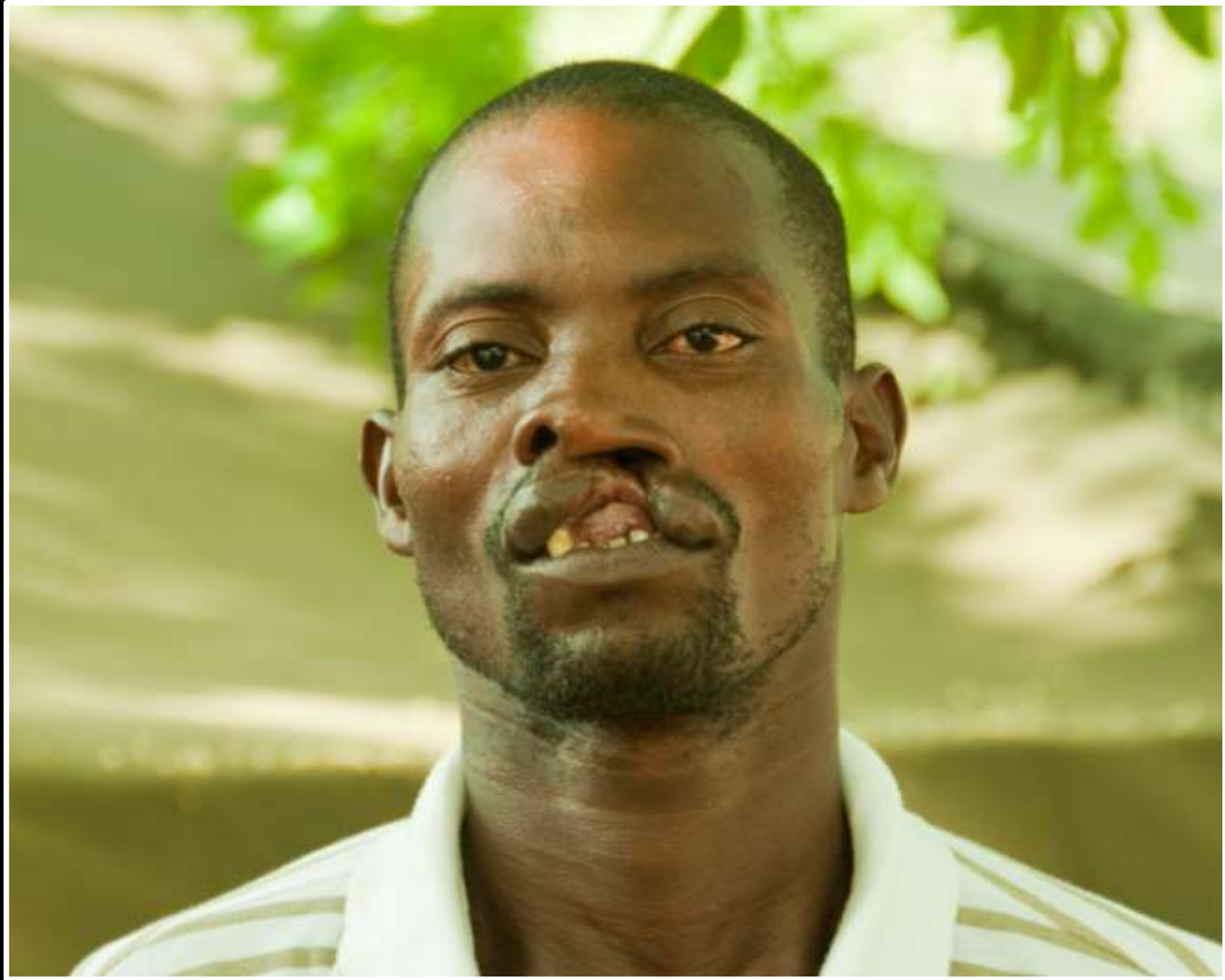


Richard Tetteh
Ridge Hospital
Accra, Ghana, Africa



By Fowler and McCaslin

Meet Richard Tetteh



Richard Tetteh, 42, is a deliberate, patient spirit. He has endured so much in his 42 years, and asked for so little.

Richard was born with a cleft lip and his parents spent years trying desperately to have it repaired. They sacrificed all of their worldly goods in this endeavor. It nearly happened, he said. Over, and over he was scheduled for surgery only to have the surgery rescheduled for another day. The long and grueling bus trips from his village to a doctor cost money, and what little money they had eventually ran out.





“I come from parents who loved me completely,” he said, adding that they also protected him completely, not allowing him to go to school. “My mother was afraid the other children would taunt me. She wouldn’t allow it.” He didn’t go to school until after his parents died. He was 18 at the time.

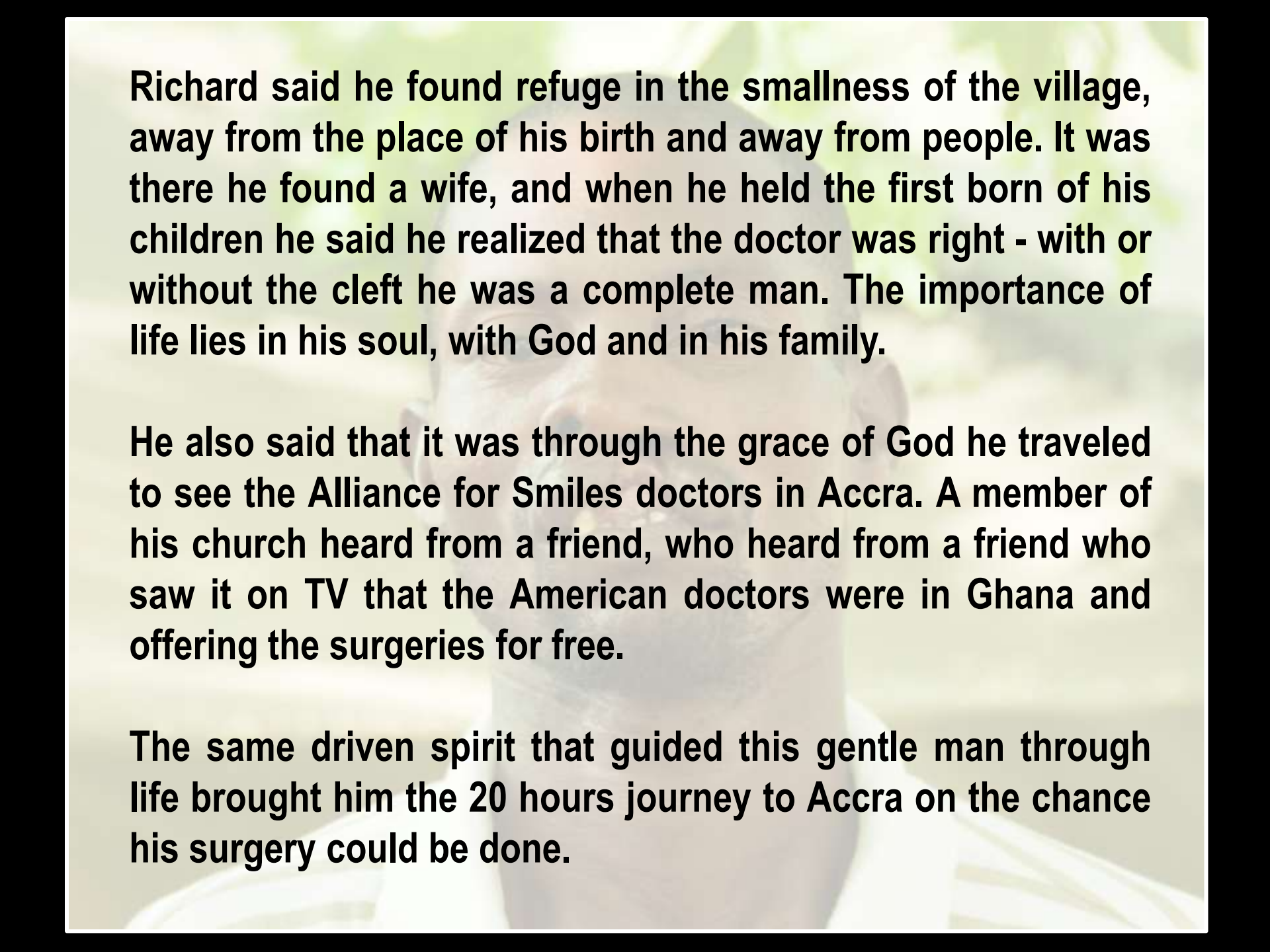


With three younger sisters and two younger brothers to house and feed, he continued his job working at neighboring farms, and with his sibling's help, went to school for the first time. He believed then what he believes today, school is that important.

By the time he hit the first year of junior high the pressure to feed, clothe and house his siblings was too much. He needed to go to work fulltime, so he did. His siblings eventually scattered and Richard now finds himself with a family of his own.



He farms a small piece of property in the Eastern Region of Ghana in a village called Okurasa, where he produces food for his a wife and children. The little village has maybe 10 inhabitants . His small farm produces just enough food for them to eat. For income he toils in the neighboring fields.



Richard said he found refuge in the smallness of the village, away from the place of his birth and away from people. It was there he found a wife, and when he held the first born of his children he said he realized that the doctor was right - with or without the cleft he was a complete man. The importance of life lies in his soul, with God and in his family.

He also said that it was through the grace of God he traveled to see the Alliance for Smiles doctors in Accra. A member of his church heard from a friend, who heard from a friend who saw it on TV that the American doctors were in Ghana and offering the surgeries for free.

The same driven spirit that guided this gentle man through life brought him the 20 hours journey to Accra on the chance his surgery could be done.



Neither his wife, nor his children know why he is away from the farm. His life has been filled with so many disappointments he it made him afraid to tell them why he was going to be gone. It is that important to him, he said. He didn't want them to share in disappointment if it didn't happen, only in joy if the surgery was a success.



All Richard was hoping for in life was to have his cleft lip changed, he said in broken English, choking back the tears. He believed the surgery would help him change his economic situation, and that if the surgery happened he would be able to get a better job.



Richard was scheduled for surgery Thursday afternoon and the transformation was clearly miraculous. His shyness and gentle nature slowly blossomed, his inner joy surfacing when the team cheered as he looked into the mirror.



AFS surgeon, Dr. Chris Hauge, said he was honored to do the surgery.
“He was very deserving, he had waited so long.”



Richard won our hearts. We are so pleased to be a part of his story.

If you would like to help someone like Richard
Log on to www.allianceforsmiles.org

