

If you saw Memory ReMine running down the street today, you would think of him no differently than any other ordinary child his age. But Memory is no ordinary child. Once you hear his story, you will feel the same.

## NEW MEMORY NEW MISSION

Words • Stephen McClintic

"I remember walking to the clinic, and my foot would catch a rock, and it really hurt," says Memory. "But I kept walking. Chris told me there was help for me if we kept walking."

That was five years ago. Memory, barely seven years old, was living with his six older brothers in the impoverished country of Zambia, located in Southern Africa. Chris, the eldest at just 17, had in Southern Africa. Chris, the eldest at just 17, had in a small shack, no bigger than a single car garage. There was no plumbing. No electricity. No heat. The floors were dirt. But it was all they had. All that was left to them.

### A Background on Memory

A few months after Memory's birth in 1997, Memory and his brothers' parents died from malaria. Left with nothing other than the shack they occupied, Chris took on the responsibility to care for everyone. He sought after and scaped up any type of food he could find for his family, just to keep them alive.

### Memory's First Look to Hope

When Memory was three-years-old, Chris decided to travel the many miles that would take Memory to a relative who he believed would best provide for him and give him a better life. Day and night, they walked across rocky terrain to reach the distant relative, and when they arrived, Chris left his youngest brother with the distant family, thinking it was the best chance for Memory to survive and prosper.

### Zambia and Witchcraft

In Zambia, witchcraft is very common. To understand why this is important to the story you must know that Memory was born with a condition called clubfoot. Clubfoot is a congenital

In Zambia, there are 10 million people, and 2.5 million are orphaned children. Among the 10 million people, 65% are under the age of 16. The life expectancy in Zambia is 32.

disease that causes the foot to turn inward. The sheer appearance of clubfoot often creates concern among people in Zambia, as they believe it is a sign of evil. While Chris trusted that his relatives would accept and embrace Memory, his premonitions were wrong. Less than a year after leaving Memory, he returned to rescue him.

### A Clinic comes to Zambia

A few years later, Chris learned that a temporary medical clinic would soon be opening just a few miles from their home. The clinic was lead by OMNI Missions, a non-profit group that focuses on medical care for orphans around the world. Chris decided to take Memory to the clinic to see if his clubfoot could be treated.

They walked for miles. Memory's foot condition made travel on foot very challenging, but they forged on nonetheless. Little did they know that once they reached the clinic, Memory's life would soon change for the better.

Our Health - January | www.ourhealthvirginia.com 15

*Incredible. Intriguing. Inspiring.  
No matter what word you use,  
Memory's story continues to  
touch us all.*

# Revisiting Memory

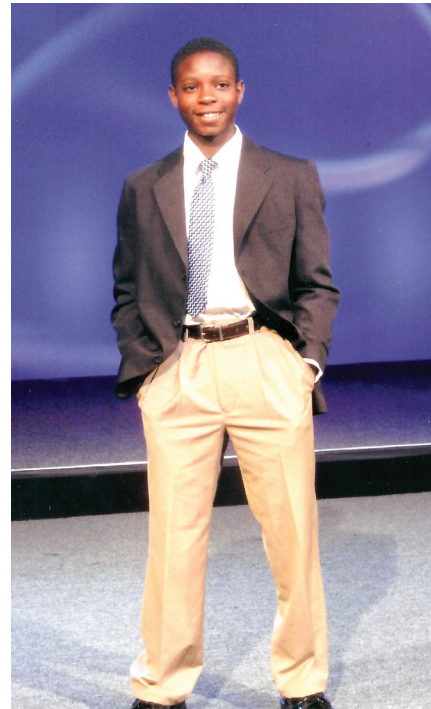
Words • Ingrid Pierce

## A Boy Named Memory

**IN JANUARY 2009, OUR HEALTH PUBLISHED THE STORY OF MEMORY REMINE**, a young boy who was born in Zambia with a condition called clubfoot. In that article, we talked about how Memory found help through a non-profit organization and was brought to the United States to correct his condition. In this Special Edition of Our Health, we provide a recap of his story as well as an update on how Memory is doing one year later.

## Memory Revisited

Memory ReMine is a remarkable young man with a unique name and an extraordinary story. If you saw Memory running down the street today, you would have never thought that this young man could not walk and only hopped on one leg just a few short years ago.



Memory spent his childhood in the country of Zambia where he was orphaned just a few months after his birth when both his parents died from Malaria. He was then raised by his older brother Chris. Memory was not like the other children in his village; he suffered from a congenital deformity that caused his right foot to turn inward, a condition called clubfoot. This deformity is usually corrected as an infant, but in Zambia, where there is little medical care, it was left untreated creating a severe deformity as he grew. The resulting physical pain as he hobbled on one foot was matched only by the ache of social exclusion and ridicule.

**But six years ago, Memory's life was transformed forever.**

Chris, his older brother brought Memory to Orphan Medical Network International (OMNI), a nonprofit organization that provides care to children in Zambia. Karen ReMine, RN president of OMNI, and her husband, Dr. Stephen ReMine took notice of Memory's condition and knew that this could not be treated in Zambia and arranged for Memory to come to the United States to receive medical treatment.

Obtaining a medical visa in Zambia for travel to the United States is a substantial task, but due to the tireless efforts of Karen, they were successful in obtaining the proper medical papers to get the VISA approved. When Memory arrived in Detroit under the care of the ReMines, a translator was sent with them as he spoke no English. The ReMines made arrangement to take Memory into their own home while he recovered from his first surgery.

"I was very scared," says Memory. "I knew I was there for them to make my foot better, but I was still very scared. I thought it was going to hurt."

After extensive consultation with a pediatric orthopedic surgeon for the correction of Memory's foot, surgery was planned at a large medical center in Detroit. An extensive procedure lengthening the skin and the soft tissue structures with rotation of the bones of the foot into proper position was attempted, which lasted for several hours. The physician entirely reconstructed the foot by removing three bones and re-shaping them. He then performed a procedure to release the tendons to help make the foot move into a more functional position. Initially it was believed to be a success. Memory's foot assumed a more normal position.

Memory remained in the ReMine's home during his recovery from the surgery and they began to love him as one of their own.

"He was such a precious boy," says Karen.

This was not the first international child the ReMines' had cared for. In fact, they already had five children - three of their own bearing and two they had adopted internationally from South Korea and Russia. By many standards, five children is a full house. But not for the ReMines.

"We bonded with Memory," says Karen. "We brought him to America to help him, but then we fell in love with him. We wanted to give him more. A better life. A chance to be something special, because he was so special to us."



In 2006, Memory was officially added to the ReMine family.

Later, the ReMines moved to Roanoke. Not long after the ReMines moved to Roanoke, Memory experienced a collapse of the corrective surgery.

“His foot once again turned inward and was causing pain,” says Karen. “To understand this, think of an elevator on the first floor, and then all of a sudden, it drops to the basement. That’s what happened to Memory.”

New to community, they asked around to learn where they should go to treat Memory.

“We didn’t want to return to Detroit unless we absolutely need to,” explains Karen. “Over and over, we were told to go visit a local podiatrist named Dr. Zelen. The many recommendations made us believe a visit to Dr. Zelen was the right choice. So we made an appointment.” Immediately, we developed a rapport with Dr. Zelen that made us comfortable. “We put our trust in him.”

“When I first saw Memory, he could not walk,” explains Dr. Zelen. “His foot was dislocated above the ankle and turned inward. Every step he put down, his foot bones were hitting the bone in his leg, causing tremendous pain. He was only able to hop on one leg.”

To treat Memory, Dr. Zelen would have to perform a rather extreme revisional clubfoot correction surgery. Reconstructive foot and ankle surgery is very familiar to Dr. Zelen and thus this procedure that Dr. Zelen planned was not his first procedure of this kind. He spent a considerable amount of time studying Memory’s case, including making calls to the hospital in Michigan to speak to the pediatric orthopedic

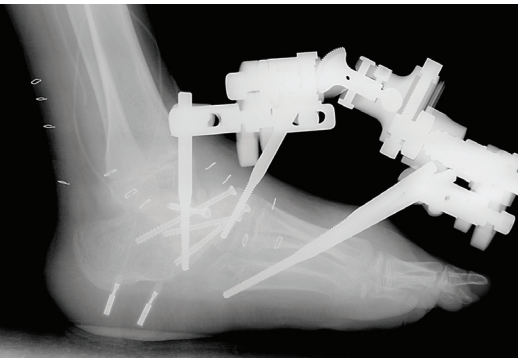
surgeon who performed Memory’s first surgery, to discuss the case in detail.

“He is so thorough,” explains Karen. “We all knew this would be a challenging surgery, but Dr. Zelen did such a great job reassuring everyone, especially Memory, that he would do his best and that everything would be OK.”

On September 2, 2007, Memory went into the hospital for surgery. The procedure took nearly six hours and was performed by Dr. Zelen, along with assistance from Robert Dallas, MD from anesthesia, Dr. David Nielson, James Porter PA-C, and Karen Young, LPN from the Carilion operating room staff.

The procedure was very challenging in every respect. The soft tissues had to be re-lengthened both in the back and in the inside of his foot. Bony structures had to be removed and re-shaped again. A fusion or a locking together of the bones of the back of the foot was needed to create a straight foot again, in addition to transferring tendons to re-create a more normal motion to the ankle. In the end Dr. Zelen had to use a great deal of “hardware” including a boney external fixator, as well as multiple screws to achieve the desired correction.

After the external fixator was removed, Memory was fitted with a walking boot, and slowly but surely, he began walking. He eventually progressed to tennis shoes and a small brace. Within six months, he had regained full strength in his leg and was walking without the assistance of the brace. Most importantly, he had a straight foot with good motion in his new ankle. The surgery was a success! Memory was now a new little boy. No more pain. No more inability to move his foot. No more limping. And no limits.



Memory spent a lot of time thinking about what he wanted to do with his newfound freedom. Football. Soccer. Running. Basketball. Anything and everything. For the first time in his life, he faced a problem that was actually a good one to have: which activity should he choose?

“Shortly after school started, Memory came home and said he wanted to join the track team,” explains Karen. “We were concerned. Memory had been through so much. He had endured pain for the longest time. We were excited he wanted to be active, but at the same time, we were hesitant because we didn’t want him to have a setback.”

Setting aside their anxiety, the ReMines decided to do whatever was necessary to help Memory move forward. But first, they took Memory to Dr. Zelen for a check-up to see if he was ready for what he wanted to do.

“The news we heard from Dr. Zelen was wonderful,” Karen exclaims. “Dr. Zelen said Memory was cleared to do whatever he wanted, as long as it didn’t cause him pain. He told us if Memory felt pain, he should sit down and take a break.

Although we were happy with this news, we were still nervous. But regardless of our anxiety, we knew it was best for Memory to do what we wanted to do.”

Memory decided he wanted to join the Back Creek Elementary track team.

“I wanted to run fast,” he said.

Sure enough, he proved to be the best runner in the fifth grade.

### Memory’s Life Now

Today, Memory, known as Memo, is thriving as an active seventh-grader. This past year, he completed the St. Patrick’s Day Shamrock Hill and the Thanksgiving Day Drumstick Dash 5K races in Roanoke and plans to run track and cross country and play football. He also enjoys the electric guitar and his skateboard.

He also is thriving socially and academically. Karen reports that Memory has full command of the English language, is articulate for his age and is active socially. Memory plans to go downhill skiing with friends from St. John’s Lutheran; an amazing achievement considering his history.

Last year Memory received an award and special pin for academic advancement at Back Creek Elementary School. This year, he started sixth grade, but after a few weeks, he was moved up to seventh grade. He made the transition beautifully and is now thriving at Cave Spring Middle School. He loves to draw. In fact, in summer 2009, he participated in a program for youth who are gifted in art. He talks about one day becoming a science teacher.

Memory stays in contact with his brother Chris in Zambia, who is 30 years old and has never been to the United States. Karen visits Chris when she travels to Zambia for OMNI, bringing him photographs and letters from Memory. Chris works on a banana plantation and struggles to support his wife and two children. Unlike Memory,

## OMNI

Today, Karen continues to make trips to Zambia as the president of OMNI, which provides long-term medical and educational support to orphaned children like Memory. OMNI’s ultimate goal is to build villages that are self-sustaining in which orphans can receive care.

Karen has traveled to Zambia 27 times and considers it her second home. On her most recent trip, she met with architects to work on plans to build a new medical clinic and expand the school. Currently, the school offers grades one through seven and serves a total of 183 students. Karen’s trips are not always safe. During this last trip, she contracted malaria and took almost a month to recover. Undaunted, she plans another visit to Zambia in April with a medical mission team that will include physicians, nurses, EMTs, and pastor Elijah Mwitanti of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Roanoke.

he never received an education because he had to take care of his six brothers. Chris passed along two words of advice to Memory: listen to your mother and get an education.

Memory recently was chosen as an inspirational success story for a large organization. The company brought in a producer from New York and videographers from Virginia Tech to film the ReMines at home.

Karen says, “I’ll tell you, Memory just keeps us going.” While on stage, Memory spoke to more than 500 people. “He was a celebrity,” Karen said in a recent interview.

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**Hope and Ambition**

Memory continues to flourish in his life with the ReMines and is highly ambitious.

“In addition to being a science teacher, I also want to be an architect, professional football player and an actor,” he says.

In light of the challenges Memory has already overcome, including poverty, physical deformity, and learning to live in a foreign land with a strange culture and language, there is no doubt he will reach his goals.

One thing is certain, he has a lot of people in his corner rooting for him.

**Support OMNI**

OMNI is looking for people who want to help transform the lives of children like Memory. After learning about the project to build a medical clinic in Zambia, many have given generous support to fund this endeavor, including Dr. Charles Zelen and his Professional Education and Research Institute. Dr. Zelen feels strongly “If each and every one of us takes what they can afford to provide for those who have little, we can all make the world a better place.” “The opportunity to provide medical care and a clinic to impoverished children is something that should touch all our hearts and souls.”

At the present time, child sponsors are urgently needed since 30 new first graders are arriving at the school in Zambia in January. Anyone interested in sponsoring a child can contact Chris Davies Ross at (540) 772-4334. More information about OMNI can be found at [www.omnimissions.com](http://www.omnimissions.com).