

Wings of Hope Using Airplane to Change It's Image

By JIM STREET

The airplane was born a peaceful beast with only the loftiest intentions: providing man with a means to achieve a life-long dream of soaring through the air with the ease of a bird.

But early in its infancy and throughout its rapid development, aviation would know the other side of man's nature and, indeed, would develop much more rapidly during times of war—both hot and cold—than it would during more peaceful years.

FOR IT DIDN'T take long for man to realize that he could gain a military advantage if he could separate himself from the ground. And the airplane as a weapons platform really developed during two world wars.

Then came the cold war (with frequent hot spots) and the entry of the quasi-military space race in 1957 and aviation reached maturity. It even changed its name to aerospace.

In spite of its docile birth and the ethereal aspirations of the space program, the airplane has become known around the world in its most grotesque form, the machine that brings bombs and destruction.

But there is a small but dedicated group called Wings of Hope that could change that image, not for the sake of the image itself but for the honestly altruistic motive of relieving human suffering.

George Haddaway of Dallas, publisher of Flight Magazine, is a founder and now serves as chairman of the board of the St. Louis-based Wings of Hope.

A native of Fort Worth, Haddaway told the Star-Telegram how the organization grew out of a strange request from an Irish mission deep in the Turkana Desert of Northwest Kenya in Africa during the early 1960s.

Floods coming on the heels of a severe drought had brought suffering and death to thousands of nomadic tribesmen in the remote desert and the Medical Missionaries of Mary set up a makeshift hospital to try to relieve some of the suffering.

But transportation as a serious problem and a jeep donated to the mission survived only a short period.

A small group in the state of Washington had given them a Piper Cub for transportation but that plane was subject to an inordinate amount of down time for patching jobs because at night hyenas would eat the fabric skins of the aircraft.

THE MISSION put out an appeal for an all-metal plane and the response to that appeal resulted in two things: the formation of Wings of Hope and a Cessna Skywagon for the mission.

"Sometimes the only way into an area is with a small airplane," Haddaway said.

Otherwise, overland trips either over mountains or jungles or down a river could take days and in some cases the trip would be wasted because help would get there too late.

From that beginning in 1964, Wings of Hope has spread to South and then Central America, New Guinea and other remote areas of the world.

It is the aviation industry's group contribution to charity. Wings of Hope is completely non-denominational and relies on contributions of cash, stock gifts and equipment to supply small airplanes and radio communications to missionaries wherever the need presents itself.

Through some press coverage and free advertising in aviation trade magazines—but mostly by word-of-mouth—the charitable work of the organization has become known world-wide and appeals for help are far greater than the ability of the organization to respond.

But wherever possible, Wings of Hope provides the airlift that makes missionary work possible.

Contributions are tax-exempt and in the case of inoperative equipment, the organization makes repairs, usually with donated labor. If donated equipment cannot be used, it is sold for cash to buy other equipment.

Typical of the Wings of Hope operations and the people who make them work is a French-Canadian Catholic priest by the name of Father Guy Gervais, better known in the jungles of the Amazon River of South America as Father Guy.



FLYING AMBULANCE—Wings of Hope pilot Guy Gervais, Peru field director for the medical-relief flying service, oversees an evacuation. The St. Louis-based organization airlifts aid throughout the world during emergencies.

Speaking a mixture of French, Spanish and broken English, Father Guy serves as field director of the Alas de Esperanza in Iquitos, Peru.

FLYING A CESSNA 206, he has logged more than 6,000 hours of some of the most difficult flying in the world with the river serving as his landing strip.

Another is Bob Weninger, based in Pucillpa, Peru. He was the first person to spot the wreckage of Lansa Electra airliner that had crashed 12 days earlier on Christmas Eve 1972, killing 91 of the 92 persons aboard.

The survivor, 17-year-old Juliane Koepke, had been returning to Pucillpa after graduating from high school in Lima. She wandered through the jungle for 11 days before being found and it was finding the one survivor that pushed Weninger to press his search for the missing plane.

Another is Sister Michael Therese, the flying nun of the Turkana who was flying mercy missions before Wings of Hope was organized and continues to fly them.

The files of the organization are replete with examples of the savings in human lives and misery despite the still small size.

A circular mentions three: "A child in a remote valley beyond the mountain from Wewak, New Guinea, is dying of dysentery. A man near the Rio Tapiche in the Amazon has been bitten by a deadly poisonous snake. A woman laboring in childbirth in the Peruvian jungle needs a doctor and the nearest one is 12 days away by boat."

Besides the saving of lives and the bringing in of needed

medical supplies, many Wings of Hope pilots are part-time dentists.

They also must be their own mechanics and are thoroughly trained in all aspects of aviation and communication. When there is a mechanical failure in the jungle, the pilot can't just stop off at the nearest fixed-base operator.

"One of the amazing things about this organization," Haddaway said, "is that 95 per cent of the money that is collected goes into the program" with only the remaining 5 per cent for administration.

"All over the world, when people think of American airplanes they think of bombs," he said. "Wings of Hope is showing some of these people that airplanes can mean something else."

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Where These Eagles Dare, The Guard Holds Its Fire

CAMP RIPLEY, Minn. (AP)—A pair of bald eagles, the national symbol and protected by federal law, have built a nest at Camp Ripley—right in an impact area on the National Guard artillery range.

Camp officials are in a quandary and Col. John Hohncke, camp commander, says the matter is not being treated as a joke.

It is a criminal offense to move the nest of bald eagles. Conviction can lead to a fine of up to \$5,000 or a year in prison.

The nest is at the top of a dead tree whose branches in

years past were blown off by artillery.

Col. Hohncke is particularly concerned because the guard's summer training period begins next month. He would like to have the area clear for artillery practice.

Hohncke says he sees no easy solution as eagles usually make their nesting area permanent. But he's hoping the birds will be scared off by the noise of exploding shells.

Meanwhile, he has ordered fire directed away from the eagle nest and added: "We're not going to have any near misses. Artillery is a controlled business."

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