



MISSION OF HOPE... Pilots from left, John Guthrie, Bob Hensleigh and Charles Hunt.



READY FOR TAKEOFF... pilot John Guthrie

## Trio flies hope to isolated locale

By KARA ROGGE  
Last weekend John Guthrie and fellow American Airlines flight engineers Charles Hunt and Will Busch took off from Mangham Airport in North Richland Hills in a single-engine Cessna 206.

Their destination was the mountainous jungle country of Northern Guatemala where the light aircraft will mean the difference between isolation and connection with the outside world for some 80,000 Indian homesteaders.

The three flight engineers and Bob Hensleigh, the owner of an aircraft lighting business at Mangham are part of Wings of Hope, a nationwide aviation-industry group that has furnished planes to isolated locations around the world since its founding in 1964.

Hensleigh plans a trip of his own in January to take medical laboratory supplies donated by a group of Dallas doctors to a Catholic mission group in Guatemala.

The Wings of Hope planes make it possible for residents of remote areas to buy supplies, sell their products and get medical attention and disaster aid that can mean the difference between

life and death, Hensleigh said.

A PLANE purchased through a grant from the Eli Lilly foundation was sent to the Brazil-Paraguay border area for use as an air ambulance and to transport doctors and nurses into remote settlements.

The area is "so far back in the sticks that the Brazilians don't even watch their border," Hensleigh said. "The planes just fly back and forth and nobody ever bothers them."

"A plane can get a doctor in there in a few hours when it would take four or five days by jeep to get there," he said.

The situation in the Central American jungle, where there are no roads, is similar.

"There are lots of Indians in Guatemala who have never been in a car, but they've had plenty of air time," Hensleigh said.

WINGS OF HOPE had its beginnings after a drought in Kenya. Turkana Desert tribesmen were starving after years without rain.

When the drought ended in a deluge the Turkana area was cut off because mud made roads into the area impassable. Trucks loaded with food and supplies for the tribesmen

were unable to get through.

Operators of a Catholic mission in Kenya put out a call for a donated plane.

No plane was found at that time, but after two years Joe Fabick, owner of a heavy machinery company in St. Louis and a private pilot, along with business and flying friends bought a plane for the mission through donations.

FABICK AND George Haddaway of Dallas, who was then publisher of Flight Magazine, were among the co-founders of Wings of Hope.

Wings of Hope acquires planes in a number of ways, Hensleigh said.

The first was bought through donations of old equipment — machinery from Fabick's associates in the heavy equipment business, trucks, generators — that were repaired and sold.

Wings gets many straight donations of money. Persons associated with the aviation industry consider it their charity, Hensleigh said.

The group also gets many "in kind" donations — ads donated by aviation publications, used radio equipment, instruments, even used planes.

"WHEN SOMEONE

has gotten all the use they can out of a plane, they can get a tax write-off if they donate it to us," Hensleigh said.

"We've gotten several planes that way. We give them a stem-to-stern overhaul and get them in condition," wings — 4.

The planes that are suitable for bush work are sent to groups in remote areas that have demonstrated that they can maintain and use them, Hensleigh said.

Others are sold and the proceeds used to buy planes or equipment.

To be suitable for Wings of Hope use, a plane must be small light enough to land on a dirt airstrip about 1,000 feet long.

THE LANDING strips in Central America are hacked out of the mountains in the small amount of land that is level enough for aircraft landings.

"They're bumpy, they're crooked, some of them bend in the middle," Hensleigh said. "One strip has a little bridge across a creek right in the middle of it and a curve right before you get to the bridge."

"There's a good deal of danger connected with this kind of flying," he said. "It takes a kind of dedication to haul some-

body out of the jungle in the middle of the night to get them to the hospital."

"And it takes another kind of dedication to stay with it," he said. "A lot of it is just constant hard work."

The Northeast Tarrant County group became associated with Wings of Hope in 1974, when an American airline pilot was looking for someone to overhaul the engine of a plane being used by a Catholic missionary, Father Bill Woods, in Guatemala, wings.

THE THREE flight engineers agreed to take it on, Guthrie said.

"We did it as a group to get some publicity for the flight engineers," he said. "Actually Will Busch did most of the work."

He laughed. "What we agreed to do was overhaul an airplane engine. What we got was airplane engine pieces and sand and gravel and spiders."

"All wrapped up in newspapers," Busch added.

"There were parts missing," Guthrie said. "It took us three months to get the parts, get the machine work done and get it put together. We were so proud of it we took it over to a test stand and ran it

with a little three-blade propeller."

"WE GOT Bob (Hensleigh) to take pictures and that's how he got in on it."

The engine was to have been returned on a chartered plane, "but we didn't want to let go of it," Guthrie said. "So we took it down ourselves and we saw what was going on. We've been getting in deeper ever since."

The four from Northeast Tarrant County — Guthrie lives in Bedford,

Busch in Hurst, Hensleigh in North Richland Hills and Hughes is a Euless City Councilman — have overhauled several planes for the organization at Mangham.

They also go into Central America to do maintenance work on the planes. Guthrie and Hensleigh overhauled a plane in Guatemala City in September.

Busch has made one trip to Surinam in South America to overhaul a plane there.

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