



Miracle In The Desert

Utility aviation is the only life-line for medical missionary work in one of the world's most cruel climates and remote, neglected areas



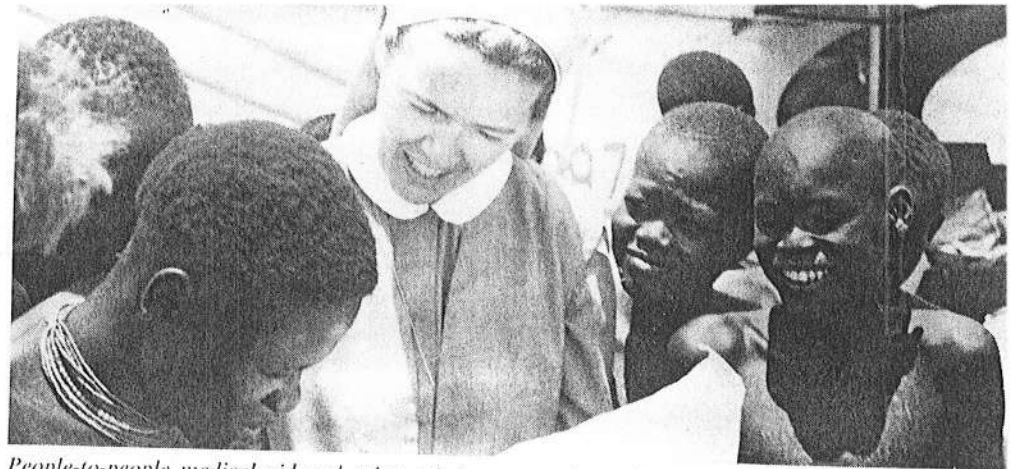
By RUTH TAKSEL

DURING a brief stop in St. Louis recently, Max Conrad, world-famous pilot, sat in a darkened aviation "groundschool" classroom and looked at slides of a missionary program underway in one of Africa's most uncivilized and isolated areas and he heard how the brand-new airplane which he would soon ferry over there will change the entire way of life for the missionaries and people of that area. A few days before, the plane had been officially presented to the United Missionary Air Training and Transport (UMATT), with Brother Thomas Dwyer, S. M. of the Brothers of Mary, Dayton, Ohio, accepting on behalf of UMATT. At the presentation, and in the room with Conrad as he heard the story of a miracle in the making, were the two St. Louis businessmen who conceived the idea and spearheaded the campaign to buy the aircraft. They are Joe Fabick, vice president of Fabick Tractor Co., and Bill Edwards, manufacturers' representative.

The soft-spoken, unassuming Conrad, who's made considerable aviation history himself, was visibly impressed by the story which unfolded before him on the screen. He saw the barren Turkhana Desert in Northwest Kenya

Sister M. Therese, the flying nun with the Medical Missionaries of Mary, is pictured in Kenya with friendly tribesmen and the Piper Super Cub which was bought and delivered to Africa two years ago by Jerry Fay and Bud Donovan, Pacific Northern Airline pilots. A larger Cessna will enable her to carry sick people, doctors, nurses and supplies and wild animals will not find its metal skin as edible as the Cub's fabric covering.

With Sister M. Therese in the Cub (below) is Brother Mike Stimac, S.M., who heads up the United Missionary Air Training and Transport operation in Kenya.



People-to-people medical aid and other missionary work are helping to stem the tide of communist infiltration and subversion throughout Africa. Here's Sister M. Therese with friendly boys interested in her map.



Sister M. Therese and Brother Mike plan the day's flying while their Super Cub is fueled. UMATT is an interfaith group based in Nairobi and provides air support to far-flung outposts of Western civilization in East Africa. The need for medical assistance became critical in the Turkhana Desert a few years ago when drought precipitated a famine that decimated the friendly tribes.



A trained medical doctor, Sister M. Therese learned to fly specifically for her Turkhana Desert medical work. Without the airplane, many medical outposts would have to close down. She has been nominated to receive the 1964 Harmon Aviatrix Trophy.

and the jagged lava fields which make ground transportation a virtual impossibility. This area was, until 1961, a political "closed area" where missionaries had never been allowed. There were pictures of the nomadic people who had for ages eked out an animal-like existence, living on the milk and blood of their few animals and scrounging for roots and insects—people who were often unclothed for the simple reason that they had no clothing to wear. He saw touching close-ups of the malnourished native children who had survived the great famine of '61, with their swollen bellies and matchstick arms—one of the reasons why the area was finally opened to white missionaries. He saw pictures of the famine camps which were set up throughout the area by the missionaries in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles and 130 degree temperatures, after food was sent in from the U.S. to help the hungry, and the sick and the dying people. It was these camps that had finally brought the people together into communities, or compounds, after centuries of aimless wandering. There were slides of the grass huts which represent civili-

zation as compared to the lives of the people before.

Flying Nuns Are Medicos

Then he saw hope enter the dreary picture, in the form of Brother Mike Stimac, one of the missionaries who'd gone there in answer to the desperate appeal of Bishop Houlihan of Kenya. Marianist, scientist, teacher, pioneer radio operator and pilot, Brother Mike was one of the first to have a vision of the miracles that might be wrought in the desolate area by an airplane.

There were also pictures of the dedicated young Irish nuns, who were nurses and doctors of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, and the first white women ever to live in that desert. He saw slides of the Super Cub, which two airline pilots, Jerry Fay and Everett (Bud) Donovan of Washington state, bought and delivered to the desert in 1963 to help solve the most critical problem of the area—transportation. The little Cub had been a blessing, but was pitifully inadequate for the job to be done; it was too small to carry a sick person and besides it was frequently out of service because the hyenas insisted on nibbling at the fabric.

There were pictures of smiling Sister Michael Therese, the nun who flies the plane on its missions of mercy, who took to the desert air with only a little more than 40 hours of pilot time behind her.

Max heard about the progress that has been made since the missionaries came to the Desert, and about the plans for two hospitals and three schools . . . how Brother Mike is teaching the African youths to operate radios and to fly . . . and of the program at the University of Dayton, which will train pilots for any planes which might be sent into missionary work in the future.

Planes For All Faiths

And then Max and the little group went outside past the powder-blue Twin Comanche in which he'd just arrived (the same one in which he'd set the distance record last Christmas) and crossed the ramp to the hangar to see for the first time the shiny Continental-powered Cessna Skywagon



This new Cessna Super Skywagon with 285-hp. Continental engine, purchased with funds donated by a large number of U. S. aviation people, will be flown to Africa by Max Conrad (left), famous long-distance pilot. In group at right, Brother Thomas Dwyer (left) of the Society of Mary, Dayton, shakes hands with Oliver L. Parks, aviation pioneer, on occasion of delivering the Skywagon to Marianists. With them are Joe Fabick, St. Louis industrialist and business pilot; Paul Rodgers, Ozark Airlines vice president, and Bill Edwards (far right), chairman of the fund-raising committee. The Society of Mary in Dayton will be the key supporting group for UMATT in Africa. —(Photos by Arteaga, St. Louis)



which he would fly to Kenya and deliver to Brother Mike and the flying Sisters and all the other missionaries of any faith in the area who can use it. This program, which started as a Catholic project, has moved far beyond the stage of belonging to any one religion. In a tradition symbolic of aviation itself, which has never known physical boundaries, this plane will be put at the disposal of all missionaries of all religions who need it and can use it. Perhaps it was a natural thing, as the goal came into sight and the plane began to materialize, for a picture to emerge—a picture of planes that would be for the use of all faiths. It was then that the new name was chosen to encompass the program regardless of how broad the scope of operation might some day become and those closest to it have big dreams, indeed. Already in Kenya, missionaries of other denominations have expressed an interest, and details are being worked out with the Flying Doctors, who operate there, to coordinate their operation with UMATT.

This has been a triumphant occasion for Bill Edwards, Joe Fabick and all the others who had seen the need and the potential of the modern American light plane in isolated parts of the world, and had joined the campaign to raise the necessary money. The list is long and includes many names familiar to the aviation world—names like Oliver Parks, Paul Rodgers, Jim Holton, Bob Considine, Dwight Joyce, Dave Kratz, Joe Geuting, Dwane Wallace, Tom McCarthy, Charles Fuerst and many others.

They are all very proud of the fact that every dime collected thus far has gone directly into the project—all administrative expenses have been absorbed by the many dedicated volun-

teers. There are contributions too numerous to mention, such as the engine by Continental, radios by Bendix

This Project Needs You

THE Cessna Skywagon flown to Kenya, Africa, by Max Conrad is only the first phase of a continuing program to support medical operations in remote areas. The United Missionary Air Training and Transport (UMATT) earnestly solicits support from everyone in U. S. aviation. Donations have ranged from \$1 to \$5,000.

Jerry Fay, one of the airline pilots who engineered the plan to send a Super Cub into the desert in 1963, has this to say about the project:

"Bud Donovan and I still hold this Turkhana project as a quiet and lasting bond between us. It's only two years now but it does seem like a lifetime ago that we were there—and I wish we could do it all over again. Doing this kind of work with these missionaries just causes the years to slough off and I felt like I was a mere lad of twenty again. Sister Therese averages 20 hours per month mostly on medical safarries on which she carries a nun-doctor. You may travel the world over but I can assure you that nothing approaches this Turkhana of Northwest Kenya. It's remote, inhospitable, a desert of contrasts in that it still supports life on a very thin line—and it is rewarding beyond belief."

Your donations or queries should be sent to UMATT, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio 45409.

and Pantronics, a B-2-D autopilot by Brittain and a tremendous amount of mechanical work by Remmert Werner.

To Africa—With Love

The first UMATT airplane is a beautiful thing. It's red and white, a six-place craft easily convertible to ambulance use, with a luggage compartment underneath, and it's all-metal, to foil the hyenas. Max Conrad has set a lot of records in his time, and he's often professed to believing in miracles. After a solemn but simple ceremony wherein the plane was blessed by a priest, a rabbi and ministers of various denominations, Conrad flew the plane eastward, making a few stops enroute to show the craft to some of the people who worked so hard for it. At Dayton, for instance, both the University of Dayton and Brother Mike's Society of Mary have made great contributions. And then, equipped with his special "torso tanks" for extra fuel, he headed the plane toward Rome, where plans were in motion to have the plane blessed by the Pope, before it officially goes into service.

This is the airplane brought into being by compassion, charity, dogged determination and good will among men, hours and days and weeks and years of hard work and donated labor and \$30,000 worth of dollars and dimes and pennies given by those who saw what a personal plane could do in a far corner of the earth. Everyone connected with the movement is certain of one thing—this is just the first of many light planes to be sent wherever in the world utility airplanes are needed most of all. These airplanes, they feel, will be American ambassadors of friendship and good will for people-to-people help.