



Far back in the jungle on the Rio Corrientes 150 miles south of the Oriente oil fields of Ecuador and Colombia, Well X-1 Corrientes may have borne out predictions of many geologists and brightened the Peruvian economic outlook. Photo was taken by the flying priest, Padre Guy Gervais.

PETROL IN TRUMPETEROS

GEOLOGISTS HAVE LONG contended that the flush Oriente oil province of Colombia and Ecuador extends southward into Peru.

That they were right may have been proved late in 1971 by state-owned Petroperu with a lot of help from Tulsa-based Parker Drilling Company, a little-known St. Louis-based organization called Wings of Hope, and a flying French-Canadian Catholic priest named Guy Gervais, who is better known through the Amazon jungles as "Padre" or "Father Guy."

The result of their joint effort is Well X-1 Corrientes, which tested 3000 bbl of oil per day from the Cretaceous near 10,000 ft to open the first significant oil production in Peru's Amazon jungles, some 150 miles south of the prolific Oriente oil fields of Ecuador and Colombia.

Should the well trigger exploration and development on anything like the scale anticipated, it could

bring significant changes in the Peruvian economy and at least a measure of prosperity to a jungle region that has never known prosperity.

Drilled to about 12,500 ft by a Parker Drilling Company Helihoist 1250-B, Well X-1 Corrientes probed a structure described as similar to those of Ecuador's Oriente. It produces from the Cretaceous, which is Ecuador's chief pay. And its productivity is described by Petroperu as "on a par" with the better strikes in the Ecuadorean-Colombian Oriente.

Located on the Rio Corrientes, south of Petroperu's Intuto base camp in the Trumpeteros area of northern Peru, Well X-1 Corrientes has raised the temperatures, not only of Peruvians, but also of many international oil companies. Occidental and BP already hold giant spreads in the general area and additional contracts for jungle exploration have recently been signed

by Peruvian subsidiaries of Amoco, Shell, Arco, Getty, Pan Ocean Oil, Transworld Petroleum, and Phillips.

Involvement of Wings of Hope and a Catholic priest in the remote jungle wildcat warrant explanation. Wings of Hope is a non-profit, non-denominational organization whose primary purpose has been to provide medical assistance in remote areas. Largely supported by people in various phases of aviation, it has been primarily concerned with giving air travel and communications assistance to all legitimate missionary enterprises without regard to church affiliations. Headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, and quick to point out that more than 95 percent of all its donated funds have been used to buy airplanes and their support services, Wings of Hope has emphasized medical assistance, but its charter also permits support of other endeavors whose success would improve life for the people it serves.

In the "life improvement" category are certain scientific and industrial activities such as the search for hydrocarbons in the Peruvian jungle. Under this provision of its charter, Wings of Hope was able to assist Prakla's geophysical people from Hanover, explorationists from several U.S. oil companies, Petroperu, and Parker Drilling Company. Under terms of its charter, no one can hire or rent Wings of Hope aircraft. Service can only be provided gratis, supported by contributors who may or may not include the individuals and companies assisted.

Assistance to oil people in the Peruvian jungle became the responsibility of Padre Guy Gervais, who is the Wings of Hope field director at Iquitos, Peru, and who—by his own account—speaks a mixture of French Canadian, Pidgeon English and Motu, embellished with Papuan and creamed with Spanish. However thick his accent, he does know how to handle an airplane.

Ordained in the 1950's and interested from the start in missionary activities, he studied anthropology, sociology and linguistics in Washington, D.C., where he also learned all he could about making sutures and casts, giving transfusions, and caring for teeth. While he was at it, he learned how to fly a Piper J-3, which he describes as a plane somewhat smaller than a 747, but more nearly tailored to the work he had in mind.

After fleshing out his education with studies of the nuts and bolts of radio and television, he departed for Papua where, deep in the interior with the help of 300 Papuans, he hacked out a 1500-ft airstrip. Returning to the coast, he put together a plane that had arrived, disassembled, by ocean vessel. And, with 85 hours of flying time under his belt, he took off over 15,000-ft mountains and into the Papuan jungle.

Whatever mistakes he made must have been minor, for he has since logged more than 6000 hours, running aerial taxis and ambulances for disadvantaged occupants of assorted remote areas. His current address is Iquitos, Peru, and his plane a Cessna 206.

That plane, called "The Glorious Cessna of Alas de Esperanza" was the only aircraft available in the early days of the Peruvian jungle search and it flew some 175 hours as a taxi, a messenger, and an ambulance for the geophysical and drilling people involved.

The result was summarized by Padre Guy in the first four words of a November '71 letter to Caterpillar dealer, flying enthusiast, and Wings of Hope president Joe Fabrick in St. Louis:

"PETROL. PETROL in Trumpe-
teros."

The significance of the discovery and the hopes it generated were apparent in the banner headlines of Peruvian newspapers during the closing weeks of 1971. But the best analysis may be this direct quote from Padre Guy's letter to Joe Fabrick:

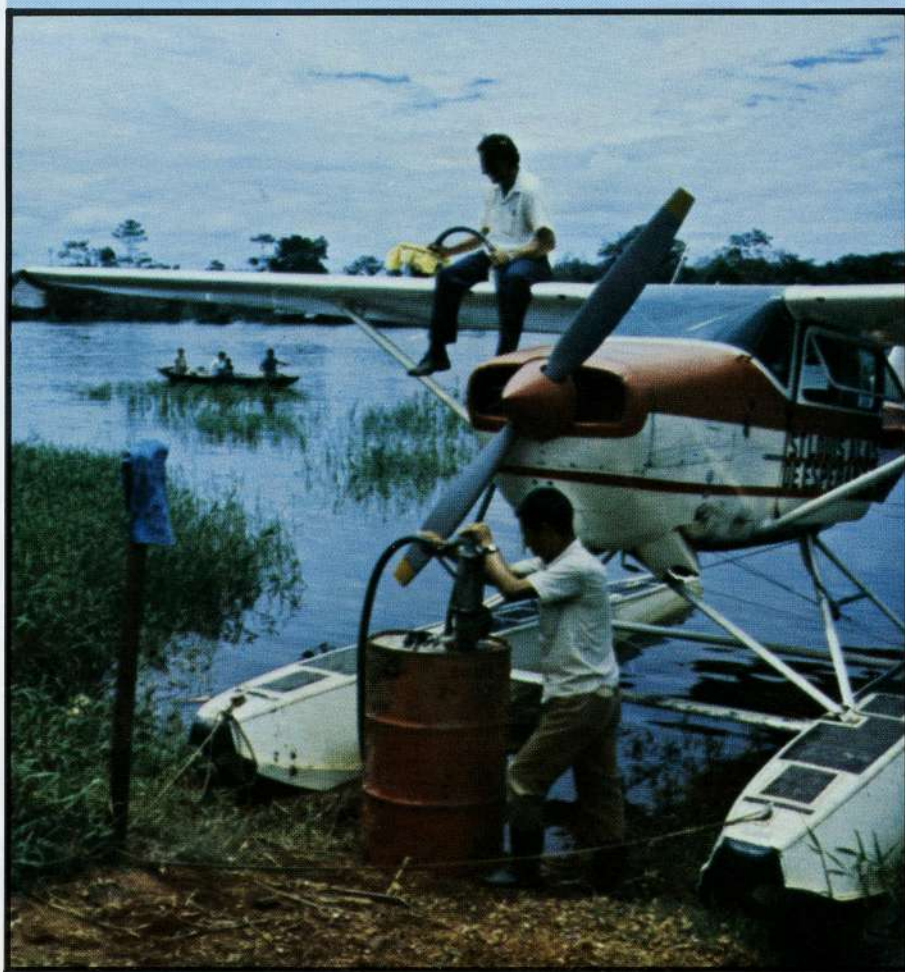
"November 17th was declared a National Holiday by the President Velasco, but here in Iquitos we were at the heart of the celebration. Brother Bill McCarthy, Eddy Schertz the pilot and his wife and I participate to the feast, listening to dynamic, emotional and progressive speeches: the Lord gave us Petrol and we should use it for his glory. This means, said a speaker, progress for the Peruvian Jungle, more schools, more hospitals, more roads and more health and happiness for our people."

When you put it that way, X-1 Corrientes doesn't sound bad at all. ☛



Wings of Hope, a non-profit organization primarily concerned with medical assistance to people in remote areas, was able under its charter to assist Petroperu, Parker Drilling, and other oil people because discovery of oil in the Amazon jungles could vastly improve the lives of residents like these.

Padre Guy, on wing, has logged more than 6000 flying hours in Papua, Peru and elsewhere. His Wings of Hope (Alas de Esperanza) Cessna 206 was the only aircraft available during much of the geophysical and drilling work at Trumpeteros and one of his principal concerns was that men he'd left in the jungle would be stranded if he couldn't get back to them. Since he is also an aircraft mechanic of considerable ability, that never happened.



A gleam of hope in the heart of darkness



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 twelve days away by boat.

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