

# AmericanWay

AUGUST 1975



## **Sharon Kirkman: Mind Over Myth**

**Project Viking blasts  
off to land on Mars**

**Pelé kicks new life  
into U.S. pro soccer**

**Benny Goodman swings  
coast to coast again**

**James Beard sizzles  
on the outdoor grill**

# Bob Considine

People



Left to right: Sink Manning, Capt. Bill Barry, and George Haddaway check flight plan for Cessna 180 Skywagon, donated by Allied Pilots Association to Wings of Hope charitable organization.

Got an old single-engined airplane lying around your back yard? Or a bulldozer that can still bull, or truck that can still truck?

No?

Well, then, what about a used tire that fits a Cessna 180 Skywagon, a leak-proof seaplane float, a portable radio you don't use, an altimeter, wind-direction sock, rundown shoes, boots, too much medicine in your bathroom closet, or a can of mosquito repellent?

No? That's odd. So, that being the case, just send a brand-new check for \$10 (or anything higher, if you want to be headstrong) to Wings of Hope, 2319 Hampton Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63139.

Wings of Hope? Yeah. It's the first major nonsectarian, nonpolitical, tax-deductible, aviation-oriented charity. It's the world's least-known but probably most colorful and appreciated airline. It operates its little planes and its scratchy communications system in

some of the most forlorn places on the planet: the remotest reaches of Kenya, Guatemala, Brazil, Peru, New Guinea, and some other places you don't plan to visit soon.

Its pilots and maintenance crews are Christian missionaries, and a little band of dedicated volunteers who daily extend the frontiers of mercy and brotherhood by the magic of aviation.

You are closer to the Wings of Hope than you realize. The pilot and copilot on your American Airlines flight today are part of the effort to reach out a hand to peoples who desperately need help. The Allied Pilots Association, which represents American Airlines' skip-pers, recently presented a new Skywagon to Wings of Hope to replace the one that was lost in a Guatemalan jungle while on an emergency flight. Not long ago, members of the Flight Engineers International Association, American Airlines, rebuilt a tired engine during their spare time and turned it over to Wings of Hope. It might be

saving a life as you read this sentence.

Wings of Hope started a decade ago. I was one of its midwives. I wrote a piece for the Hearst newspapers that went like this:

"Hyenas have joined the Soviets in attacking Christianity. The beasts have been eating the fabric of the little Piper Cub owned by the St. Patrick's Missionary Society and the Medical Missionaries of Mary. The plane is the Missionaries' main hope of tending their stricken flock of 15,000 scattered Trukhana Desert nomads in northwest Kenya. . . .

"These intrepid souls need a new plane, one big enough to carry food and medicine to destitute and roadless regions, powerful enough to take off from makeshift strips with sick tribespeople in need of hospital care, and simple enough to be flown by the priests and nuns concerned. Their 'parish' measures 30,000 square miles.

"A good Protestant friend of theirs, **George E. Haddaway**, publisher of *Flight* magazine, has broken a company rule by appealing to private plane owners among his readers to chip in, tax deductible, enough to buy the Missionaries one of Cessna's new Skywagons (hyena-proof because it has a metal skin)."

The "pitch" strummed some sensitive chords. Haddaway, long-since chairman of Wings of Hope, found particular support in St. Louis among such businessmen and humanitarians as Oliver Parks, Joe Fabick, Paul Rodgers, Dave Kratz and Tom McCarthy. The Skywagon was bought and flown to its destination, halfway around the world, by the incomparable "Flying Grandfather," **Max Conrad**.

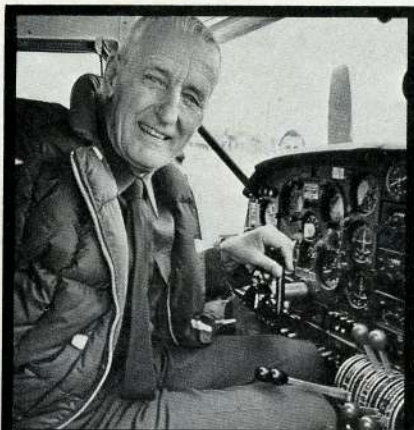
There is now a fleet of two dozen Wings of Hope planes, some of them being flown and cared for by natives who were taught their skills by the pale-faced strangers who literally dropped out of the skies to help them. The organization could easily make use of twice that many planes. But with what it has, its accomplishments are nothing short of amazing. It responds immediately to such radio emergency

calls as the case of a child dying of dysentery in a remote village out of Wewak, New Guinea; a man dying of snake bite in a mud village along a branch of the Amazon; a Peruvian woman laboring in childbirth. It flies aid in an hour or less to sick and hurt victims who could not be reached by foot, vehicle or boat within many days, or even weeks. It is the winged messenger which, in one area, reduced infant mortality rates from 80 to 10 percent. It carries food and building materials as well as medicines, transforms its planes into air ambulances when nothing else suffices, airlifts more teachers than preachers, flies missions into such places as Honduras when it was flattened by Hurricane Fifi.

Its pilots would be hard to believe if portrayed in a movie or on TV. They land on machete-cleared or bulldozed little dirt strips where angels would hesitate to alight, or on waters where there is a question of hitting a school of alligators. They have no radar, no control towers to beckon them to safe harbor. They fly through weather frowned upon by birds. They feel their way through mountain passes too narrow to dwell upon. On night flights, their strips are sometimes marked by a native holding a flashlight at the end of the runway, or lined by burning kindling wood, or even candles.

The Wings of Hope skypilots can range from a beautiful Irish nun, who is also a surgeon, to pros with eyes crusted by 10,000 sunsets blazing into their cockpits. One of the more colorful is a French-Canadian priest named **Guy Gervais**, a man for all seasons and crises. After his social-medical training at Catholic University, Washington, D.C., he practiced medicine, learned to fly, delved into anthropology, airplane maintenance, radio technology, and even looked into dentistry. "Father Guy," as natives call him, speaks fluent English, French, Spanish and a bewildering variety of New Guinean and Peruvian dialects. He is, among other skills, the best obstetrician in the Wings of Hope.

Then there is **Sink Manning**, chief



**Max Conrad**, better known to Kenya's desert nomads as 'Flying Grandfather.'

pilot of the APA-contributed Skywagon. He saved the life of a Guatemalan whose head had been split open by a falling tree. Took him off at night for Guatemala City from a strip illuminated by two lines of natives holding torches.

"Just before taking off from the strip," he later wrote, "the man's eyes seemed to clear for a moment and he reached up and touched me on the side of the face as if to say thank you for what you're trying to do . . . I feel that God, too, is saying thank you to all of you who made this air service possible."

*Bob Considine's celebrated column, "On the Line," for King Features Syndicate, appears in more than 100 newspapers here and abroad.*

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