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# *the 99 news*



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GUATEMALA EARTHQUAKE!

3:04 AM February 4, 1976





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Wings of Hope field-director, Guy Gervais, surveys the horrible earthquake devastation at Joyabaj.

Gervais and Guatemalan volunteers load the injured into the Wings of Hope airplane (donated in memory of Roy C. Wayne, Sr.) for air evacuation to the base hospital.

**Saundra Lapsley**

As the earth still shuddered, that dark Guatemala night, Wings of Hope pilot Guy Gervais, his pregnant wife Ruth, and crying baby Pablito piled into their panel van and hurtled through the mortar-filled streets of Santa Cruz del Quiche, gathering stunned friends and neighbors as they went. The flat, open expanse of the airport. . .that is where they would, perhaps, be safe. . .and hopefully, so would be the Wings of Hope Cessna 185 hangared there.

Finding all was well, the refugees passed the rest of the night in the van and plane. It was not until morning that they came to realize the full extent of the disaster. The entire middle zone of Guatemala City had been leveled. Everywhere there was death and destruction.

By 8:30 A.M., the Wings of Hope airplane was enroute to Guatemala City, Gervais flying on instruments through the dust in the earthquake's wake. It was the beginning of five days of continuous emergency flying for Guy Gervais and Sink Manning, the regular Wings of Hope pilots based there, plus the additional volunteer pilots who hurried to their aid.

Arriving at the hangar of Aer Ixcan, Wings of Hope's joint venture partner in Guatemala, Gervais was joined by Pierre Swick, a volunteer pilot from American Airlines. They immediately returned to Quiche with a load of relief supplies. Landing there, they received a request to fly a doctor to Joyabaj, a community of

about 14,000 with a short bush-type airstrip.

"What a tragic sight awaited us at Joyabaj," Gervais reports. "Not a single house remained standing, and we estimated that 3,500 people were dead. I flew back four injured Guatemalans to Quiche, and upon official request, agreed to concentrate my efforts to serve the desperate needs of the people at Joyabaj. On successive trips, we carried potable water, food and supplies from CARE and Catholic Relief Services. . . members of the Peace Corps, doctors, nurses, engineers and various government officials. On many of the flights, I was accompanied by my wife Ruth, herself a nurse."

The Wings of Hope Cessna was also needed for 20,000 people living in the jungle areas of the Zona Reyna and the Zona Ixcan. Gervais flew two flights a day for them, as well, until, in due time, army helicopters and other relief planes joined in the efforts. All roads were blocked.

Supporting the work of Wings of Hope and Canada's Wings of Peace in those first days were many U.S. and Canadian aircraft bringing in medicines, clothing, food, powdered milk, shelters and relief workers. The tragedy also drew the assistance of volunteer pilots such as Mike Sullivan, who took a commercial flight from St. Louis into the disaster zone.

Mike, who had previously flown with Aer Ixcan, spent a week in the country, flying mercy missions in a second Wings of

Hope plane. He sums up the operating conditions aptly with this story: "The next trip was to a town called Chimaltenango on the Pan American Highway. Landslides had cut off the road to the town, and it was now being used as an airstrip. My cargo this time was a U.S. doctor who, unfortunately, was also a pilot, and was a bit dismayed at the weight being thrown in. 'Don't worry, Doc,' I told him. 'It's not the weight. . .it's the balance that gets you. Now put your back against the instrument panel and tell your buddy to lean forward.' "

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When disaster strikes. . .

Where the needs of the people are greatest. . .

Wings of Hope wants to be there to serve. But the extent of its service can only be as great

As the extent of your support.

Support this charitable, non-sectarian, non-political aviation enterprise through your tax exempt donation of new or used aircraft, automobiles, equipment, avionics and other salable items. . .or if you prefer, make a monetary contribution. Perhaps you may even want to make a Wings of Hope aircraft a living memorial to someone you love, as is the Roy C. Wayne Sr. Memorial Aircraft shown on our cover.

Give as you have prospered. . .so that others may have hope!

Write Wings of Hope, 2319 Hampton Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63139.