

General Aviation News

"The Green Sheet"

\$.30 Per Copy

2517 College Ave. — Snyder, Texas 79549

April 25, 1977

Don's Hangar Flight

by Don Emerson

WINGS OF HOPE

I'm well aware of the fact that the few readers I have (who continue to give this column "another chance," issue after issue) stay thoroughly confused about a "plot" or "message." **There ain't none!** The late, but still very much alive to me, Chuck Wolfe, assigned me the task in these words: "Write whatever you feel like writing... fiction, non-fiction, nonsense...." I have tried to fulfill the requirements. So, the yarns in hangar flight have gone from fact ("Chickenloomer") to fantasy (Hansel & Gretel) to sci-fi. (Meanwhile Back at the Ranch) and so on. For the first time ever, I choose to write a "gut" yarn that is very real. **So take notice!**

There is an outfit based in St. Louis that needs your help — Wings of Hope. The address is 2319 Hampton Avenue and the zip is 63139.

Now, I know about Wings of Hope because I'm on the roster as a charter member. I'm sorry to admit, that I sincerely believe I've fallen short of what a charter member is supposed to do... but if good wishes, prayers, and good intent have any meaning, I'm up there in the front ranks. Unfortunately... "If wishes were coaches, then beggars would ride!" I did donate some ham radio gear one time, but not the best stuff, and I've dropped a small check from time to time, but not as much as I would have liked. When my "cycles" are down and I feel like junking everything and hanging myself — or running away — I always consider the latter as the better alternative and then daydream my way back up the "cycle" by all the good and brave deeds I would do for Wings of Hope in the far off places they operate. **That kind of help they can do without.**

At any rate, I have a drawer in the filing cabinet here labeled WINGS OF HOPE; it contains a fine collection of letters, reports, photos, copies of articles and other data referring to the remarkable activities of this wonderful group of folks. Of all the charities I know — and I've been snookered a few times — W-O-H — is the only outfit where I feel my "donation" is not only gratefully received, but honestly dealt with in its distribution. This non-profit, non-political, non-sectarian operation actually does what they say they do... put ninety percent of it out in the field. The fact that your donation in dough or airplanes, radios, tractors, tools, or what have you is fully tax deductible is an added incentive to help out.

But WHO are you helping... and how? From what I can gather — and I've got a good gatherer — the entire philosophy of Wings of Hope is to train these "needy" folks to help themselves. I'd much rather give a guy a hammer and saw then teach him how to use it, than set up a soup kitchen. I'd much, much rather help a guy develop his own natural abilities and resources.... than give him mine, and this is the fundamental philosophy of the Wings of Hope.

And this courageous group of St. Louis businessmen, and their associates worldwide, are to be given a big pat on the back, along with a few shekles, because they operate their charitable organization in perspective. Let me explain: It crosses the mind of most of us, from time to time, to head for the Amazon to fight the elements and save mankind. No less a person than Mark Twain set down the Mississippi with this noble task in mind... only to get sidetracked before he reached Cairo. These days, a few of us make it all the way to New Orleans... but then, travel is a little easier. At any rate, playing humanitarian may seem exciting at first... flying over uncharted wasteland, poling up rivers hissing with croc's and snakes, hacking through jungles full of fer de lance's, tarantulas, etc.... not to mention a few unfriendly natives still about. But 99.44 percent of the time it ain't that way. It's boring, humdrum, thankless, humiliating, exhausting and frustrating... with a few sparkles of stark terror to make it interesting. On the positive side, there is the shy glance of a grateful child, the intent look of a native really trying, the toothless smile from some dumbass you could care less about... but suddenly you're there... and you DO.

I'll not try to defend Wings of Hope and their overseas work. There are many who gripe that they wouldn't mind giving something if they helped the poor folks within our own borders, but I never met one of them that gave on the local level either... so it's no matter. Besides, the world is a lot different now than a few years ago. The old "charity begins at home" saw doesn't carry much weight when our problems are now worldwide and dependent on world cooperation, which brings up a fact I want to reinforce here and now. Wings of Hope is non-political... there are no government strings attached; as a matter of fact, the folks go so darn far to make sure there are no government strings attached that they frequently make life miserable for themselves in all areas concerned. You'd be amazed how difficult red tape — on both sides — is to circumvent when all in hell you want to do is HELP somebody! It's enough to make you shuck the whole project... but that St. Looie crowd seems to be equipped with copper veins and ice water flowing through them.

So if you're one of that rare breed who really wants to help... but don't know how; if you are truly sincere and not on some sort of damaged ego trip; if you've got a plane, engine, or what not that can be put to use.... or converted to cash so that can be put to use, get in contact with them. If you're really HOT and have a fifty you'll give on impulse, call 'em up and ask for Bill Edwards before you cool off. These folks need help and it'll be good for your psyche.

For further information, contact
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314-647-5631.