



WINGS OF HOPE



Kent Furlow

"An unforgettable experience..." ...is about the only way Kent Furlow says he can describe the 14 days he spent observing and photographing the operations of Wings of Hope in the Central American Jungle of Honduras.

An equipment man to the core, Furlow has been associated with construction machinery virtually all of his 34 years. He is the son of the co-founder of Furlow-Laughlin Equipment Co., Alvin I. Furlow, and is presently executive vice president of the Baton Rouge, La. firm. And there isn't a function of a distributorship

with which he is not familiar—the shop, parts department, sales and accounting, he has worked in them all. But Kent Furlow admits that nothing really prepared him for the experiences he shares with CED's readers in this diary he kept during his "vacation" in Honduras.

Fortunately, however, there was one aptitude which Kent carried with him when he went there at the behest of Wings of Hope last September. That is a long nurtured avocation for photography.

As Bill Edwards, Executive Director for Wings of Hope tells it: "Kent was a natural for the assignment. For many years now we have been hampered in telling the complete story about Wings' humanitarian services by a lack of good photographs. Unfortunately, the pilots who fly the airplanes Wings operates for mercy missions have only been able to capture their own exploits with run-of-the-mill snapshots. What we needed were pictures of a near-professional quality.

"Besides, the Cessna 185 being used in Honduras had

been recently christened the Furlow-Laughlin Memorial Aircraft because of the generous support that company had given to Wings of Hope. It was an excellent opportunity for someone in the firm's organization to see, first-hand, the full benefit of that generosity."

Somewhat modestly, Kent Furlow refers to his own skills with a camera by saying, "I'm not a professional, but to me photography is a good deal more than just a hobby." A good deal more, we'd agree; considering that he has taken instruction from such acclaimed artists as Ansel Adams, Arnold Newman. And that instruction served him well when he took on the assignment to go to Honduras.

Travelling aboard the Furlow-Laughlin Memorial plane with its pilot Roy Johnsen, Kent kept a written and photographic diary which vividly portrays what it is like to unselfishly serve humanity. As the accompanying pictures and diary by Kent Furlow will attest, we believe he filled his assignment admirably.

— The Editors

“Another time... ...Another place... ...Another world.”

By Kent Furlow, Exec. V.P.,
Furlow-Laughlin Equip., Inc.,
Baton Rouge, La.

TWO WEEKS' WORTH of clearly focused images caught in the viewfinder of my Nikon and stored for posterity in an ordinary tray of 35mm slides. They're just like the photographs left over from another ordinary vacation; they show beautiful scenery and smiling faces.

But there are also pictures of pain, suffering, and unbelievably primitive squalor. For this “vacation” took place on the shores of the Caribbean alright, but not at any posh resort. My visit took me to a jungle valley in the Central American Republic of Honduras. My assignment: to capture a photographic record and keep a daily diary of the work done by a humanitarian organization called Wings of Hope.

What's it like there? Probably the most overriding and lasting impression is one of being transported to an entirely different world—not a world of the future, but one in which humans live much as they did centuries ago. My recollections come to mind, much like the individual frames on the film in my camera.

■CLICK

The first slide shows a familiar sight—not at all like Honduras—but it gave me a hint of what was in store while still at New Orleans International Airport. The scene is the waiting room outside the Sahsa Airlines boarding gate. We had to wait well over an hour before boarding the Honduran National Airlines 737 because Sahsa apparently doesn't have much influence in New Orleans. The airport authorities make only one gate available to Sahsa and we could not use it until the inbound flight was unloaded. I found out later that the delay is quite normal for Sahsa and regular passengers generally don't complain.

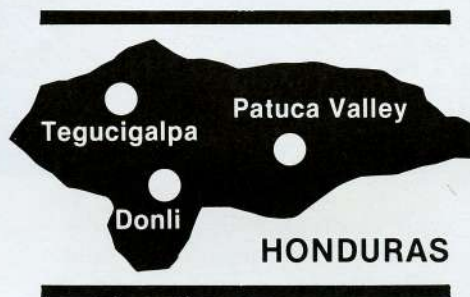
■CLICK

The scene wasn't much different when we landed at San Pedro, the Honduran seaport on the Caribbean. The veteran turbo-prop we were to

change to had been waiting for us to arrive, but it was another half hour after we boarded until the pilot finally started the engines—and the air conditioning started to function. It must have been 120 degrees inside the cabin as we took off again this time for Tegucigalpa, the capital city in the interior of Honduras.

■CLICK

My first sight of Roy Johnsen, my host in Honduras, was of him sitting in a landrover parked on the edge of the airstrip at Tegucigalpa. Roy



explained that he had borrowed the landrover from Padre Luis, a Canadian missionary who has been working in the Patuca Valley—our ultimate destination—for 15 years. Once my luggage and camera equipment were hustled into the landrover, Roy headed for an apartment in Tegucigalpa, where we were to spend the night with three American Peace Corps. volunteers.

■CLICK

Passing through its streets, you are immediately stunned by the fascinating contrasts in this capital city. The Atlas says it has a population of 135,000. But that was when the Atlas was printed. Today, Tegucigalpa must be twice that size. The streets and sidewalks are always crowded and while there are quite a few modern buildings, most of the city is old—and quite obviously poor.

They say the bus system is good, though, as long as you don't mind crowding yourself into a mini-van with twenty five or so other bodies. But busses are a rock bottom necessity here because few, if any,

of this city's people can afford personal automobiles.

■CLICK

Sitting around the apartment living room that first night I had a chance to learn a little more about Roy Johnsen. I didn't know how much more I would learn about him during the next two weeks.

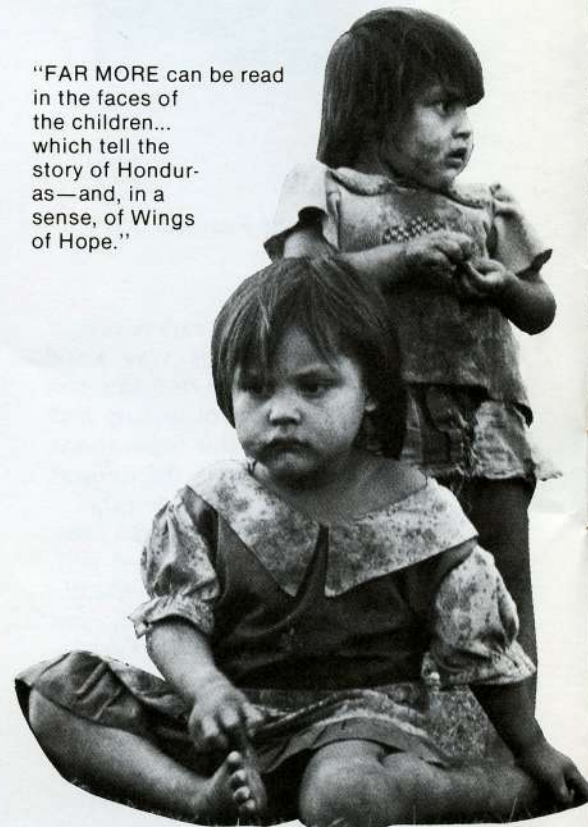
Roy is a former Navy pilot who has flown just about every type of aircraft there is—from helicopters to jet fighters off aircraft carriers during the Vietnam War.

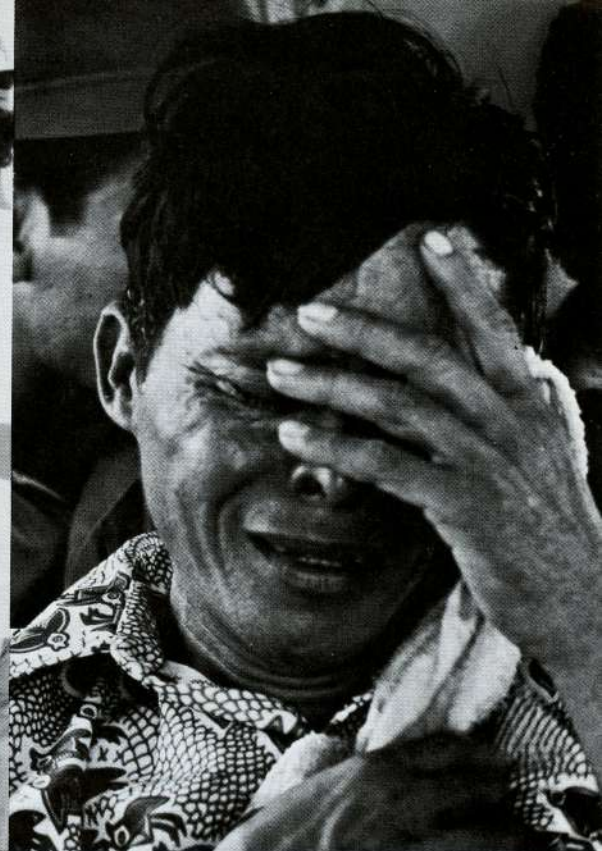
At 48 years of age, Roy is a tall, muscular man whose looks belie his age and 20 years of experience in the air. Although he's modest and has a soft smile which shines through the sun-tanned features of his face, he freely talks about his background—but as if there were nothing different or outstanding about it at all.

After Vietnam, Roy went into charter flying and at one point owned his own charter airline. After several years of that he went to work with the Federal Aviation Administration as an investigator who specialized in determining the causes of airplane crashes.

At one point, as he tells it, he became acquainted with a missionary, Rev. Ray McKee, who recounted

“FAR MORE can be read in the faces of the children... which tell the story of Honduras—and, in a sense, of Wings of Hope.”





to Roy the charitable work Wings of Hope has been doing in such places as Central and South America and Africa. Deliberately making a long story short, Roy explained that he simply became interested in Wings of Hope and volunteered for an assignment, for little more compensation than the adventure involved.

It wasn't quite that simple, as I was later to learn, because as an employee of the FAA, Roy had to formally request a leave of absence. That was granted, alright, but was supposedly the first time in its history that the FAA allowed an employee a full year's leave to perform such work.

It didn't take long for me to learn during the next few days that the partnership of Roy Johnsen and the Wings of Hope in the Honduras jungle valleys was as perfect as possible.

■ **CLICK**

We're off to Donli, the provincial capital of 10,000 population to the east of Tegucigalpa—but not by air. We took the more scenic route via the landrover and a nice two-lane paved highway. Once past Donli, however, the highway ends—along with telephone polls, telegraph lines



ROY JOHNSEN'S "Bodega," a rickety warehouse, serves as Wings of Hope's headquarters in Honduras, a land where young boys make what fun they can spinning tops amid the most primitive living conditions and misery imaginable.

(yes, they still use telegraph), electricity, mail deliveries, and the other amenities of life we take for granted.

Beyond Donli, it is dirt road, kerosene fuel for everything, word of mouth communication—and endless rivers, potholes and mud-slides to negotiate.

It was interesting to me—having been associated with construction—that the farther we drove, the less we saw of adobe construction and the more of mud and stick huts—then only plain stick walls. Roofing materials, likewise, got more primitive as we traveled along—from corrugated metal roofs to clay tiles, then bare wooden shingles and, finally, grass thatching.

■ **CLICK**

Santa Maria...not a prayer or an exclamation...just a village of about 1,000 at the end of the road from Donli, which serves as the base of operations for Wings of Hope in Honduras. My first sight was of the Furlow-Laughlin Memorial aircraft, a Cessna 185, as it stood ready on a 20 acre pasture airstrip in the middle of town. A rain shower had just passed and the plane was framed by a subtly hued rainbow—the kind of picture every photographer dreams

of capturing on film.

It's only the sound of an occasional bus or the roar of the Cessna's engine which disturb the quiet of this quaint village, I was told. From here onward there are no roads, just paths which can only be negotiated first by oxcarts and then only by burros.

It's the airplane, in fact, which serves as the vital link to the villages of the Patuca Valley which lies just over the mountains to the northeast. The cows and horses keep the grass on the airstrip cut and two local cowboys—as Roy calls the young boys—keep the area clear of the horses and cows during takeoffs and landings.

■ **CLICK**

We were about to bed down for our first night in Santa Maria when we were given an example of local law enforcement in action. Two local policemen asked us to take them up the side of the mountain because they have no patrol cars here. They said there had been a robbery, of all things. After bounding our way upward in the landrover for two and a half hours, the lawmen suddenly asked us to stop and let them out in the middle of the jungle. Somehow

we found our way back to the town over some of the worst roadway a landrover could handle.

About two days later we saw the policemen back in town and asked if they had caught their suspects. They explained that they had and that they caught a ride down the mountain to the main road and put the two on a bus to Donli with instructions to report to jail. When we asked why the criminals would report to jail instead of trying to escape, they replied, "Oh, they wouldn't do that. Then we'd have to capture them again—and they wouldn't want us to have to do that."

■ **CLICK**

Finally bedded down Saturday night in the "bodega" where I would be staying with Roy for the next 14 nights. The "bodega" is nothing more than a rickety warehouse originally built by an agricultural coop started by Padre Luis, the Canadian missionary, and loaned to Wings of Hope for Roy's use.

When dawn arrived I found out that we cook on a kerosene stove, store our food in a kerosene refrigerator (one of the few in town), boil our water 20 minutes before

WINGS OF HOPE



drinking—and that the bathroom's "out back."

After we put a new roof on the outhouse, we made a couple of air trips over the mountain and into the Patuca Valley, although Roy tries not to fly on Sundays because that's usually the only day he has for general housekeeping and administrative work. We packed the plane with pots and pans, dried mild and 50 lb. sacks of grain and took off from the pasture in front of our quarters.

This is just one of the functions Roy and the plane perform; simply ferrying supplies—everything from the mundane to exotic medicines—across the mountain and into the Valley, supporting an agrarian settlement and coop program started by Padre Luis. The 15 to 20 minute flight compares to a two to five day ordeal by land, travelling the moun-



tain paths by burrow, oxcart or on foot to reach the coop settlements in the valley.

Our landing strip is 1,500 feet of bare dirt cut out of the jungle. Each time the plane is greeted with smiles. Some men have been waiting, hoping the plane will take them back to Santa Maria—which is the outside world to them.

It's a mark of the gratitude and reverence in which Roy is held by these people that when Roy suggests that the grass along the runway at Patuca is getting a bit high, a dozen men with machetes appear and within a few hours the grass is cut.

■ **CLICK**

Two faces caught in the viewfinder of the camera—each a portrait of pain and suffering. It was those two faces which told me more than anything else during the next two weeks what Wings of Hope is really all about.

When the plane touched down at Patuca on the first of the five trips we were to make that day into the Patuca Valley, two men rushed up to the door. They had brought to the airport two other men, one with an eye injury, and the other suffering a mysterious pain which was apparently racking most of his body. He had lost most of his muscle control and was crying like a helpless baby.

The two men were helped into the plane by their friends and we took off for Donli. Because Donli has nothing resembling an airport, we landed on the highway and sent the first passing car into town for an ambulance.

It was later that we learned the condition of the man with the mysterious illness. It was tentatively diagnosed as cerebral malaria and, although the hospital immediately put him on the critical list, the plane ride had at least given him a chance. He would have had no chance at all of surviving the minimum two to three day trip out of the jungle by road.

Roy mentioned that malaria in the Valley has reached epidemic proportions lately. After he told me that, I could better understand the appreciation on the faces of the man's friends when we returned to Patuca later that day.

Roy didn't say it until then, but

it was one of those peculiarities of fate that we had made the trip to Patuca that day. There was no communication from the jungle back to Santa Maria at the time the one man was injured and the other succumbed to the malaria. That was because a fire had destroyed the bodega in Patuca a short time before—and with it, the radio which had been used to maintain communications.

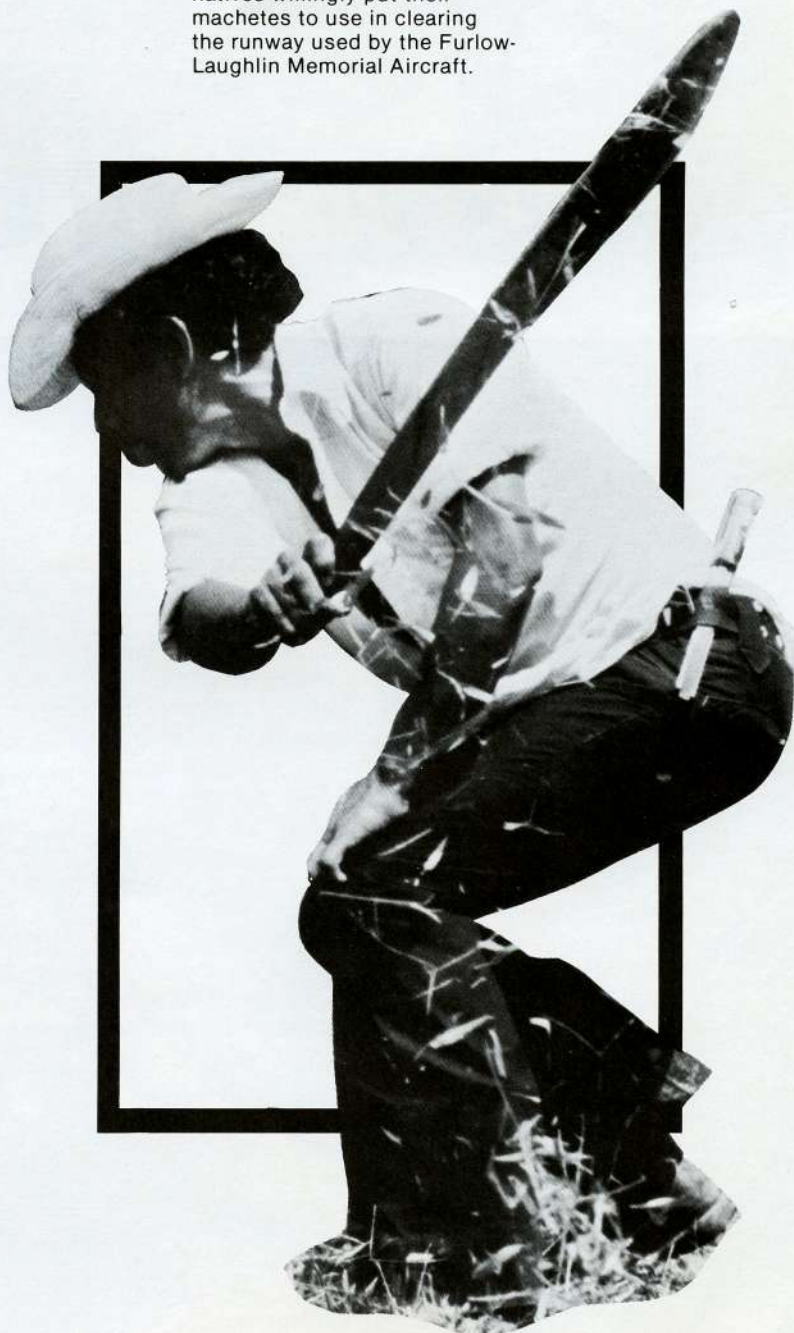
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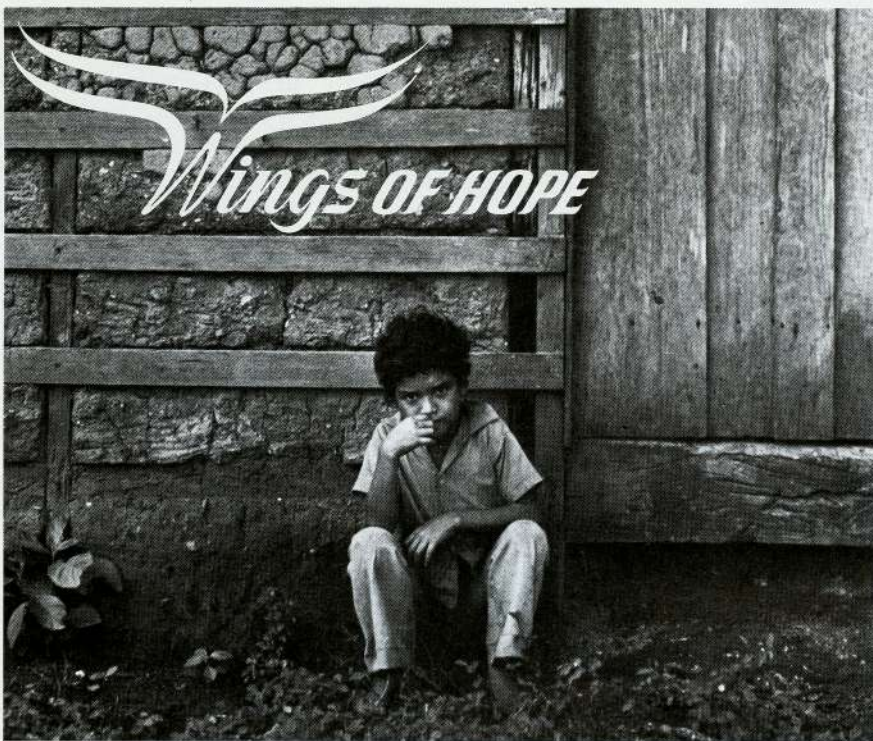
Each morning in Santa Maria, I was awakened by the lady next door pounding out tortillas long before

the roosters and pigs had gotten out of bed and well before the kids started spinning their tops. I haven't seen a kid in the states spin a top in years, but these are experts at it—in fact, it's about the only game there is for them.

I don't mind admitting that I fell in love with those kids. Not speaking a work of Spanish, I had trouble communicating with the adults, but not the kids. Sign language is universal with children. When I first arrived in Santa Maria, they were a

AIRSTRIP GRASS too high—natives willingly put their machetes to use in clearing the runway used by the Furlow-Laughlin Memorial Aircraft.





little skeptical of the gringo with the cameras. But after a few days, instead of having to ask “permission to photo?” in fractured Spanish, I would be stopped and asked if I would take their picture.

One day a mother stopped me in the street, and pointed to her daughter and said something about “photo.” When I agreed, she smiled but then grabbed the girl and disappeared. In less than a minute, however, they reappeared with the daughter wearing a long blue dress which was obviously her Sunday best.

It wasn't the clothing or the general living conditions which really brought home to me the kind of life these people lead. Far more can be read in the faces of the children which I was lucky enough to capture on film. It's their expressions which tell the story of Honduras—and in a sense, of Wings of Hope.

■ **CLICK**

Paid a visit to Javier's home one afternoon. Javier is a young man in his early 20's who was hired by Wings of Hope to help Roy Johnsen keep records and help load and unload the plane. His home is typical of Santa Maria, built of mud and sticks.

The interior is about 12 by 14 feet and has an inside partition of paper mache', consisting entirely of magazine pages. A wooden trough which hangs outside a rear window,

much like a flower box, serves as a sink. Of course, the water has to be brought inside in a bucket for cooking purposes.

The stove in the corner of the house is made of mud—but is pretty classy for Santa Maria because Javier has afixed the lid of a 55 gal. drum to the top of the mud stove to serve as a griddle. Javier and his wife have a family of pigs and chickens, in addition to their own two children and another on the way. Most families, I was told, have anywhere from five to ten children.

■ **CLICK**

On almost every flight over the jungle we can see fires burning below. That's because almost everyone in this part of Honduras grows crops. They slash and burn a few acres, grow four or five years worth of crops, and then move to another spot. We were told by the Peace Corps people there that if agricultural methods aren't changed, in 150 years Honduras will have no new fertile lands available.

■ **CLICK**

Flew into Patuca again, this time ferrying in from the capital, Tegucigalpa, three Peace Corps volunteers and a doctor from Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore. Roy had been encouraging the Peace Corps to send some of its people into the valley for quite a while.

After landing, we walked for about 45 minutes to the nearest

village, quaintly named Nueva Palestina—or New Palestine. The doctor immediately set out to make some house calls. But many of the villagers had never seen a doctor, so when the word spread that there was one in the village, it seemed that everyone “got sick” at once. Some cases were serious, but many others were not, thank goodness.

We slept that night on a hard dirt floor under a shingle roof. Mid-way toward dawn, when it began to rain, one of the villagers came to our aid by climbing the stick wall and re-arranging the shingles to stop several leaks.

That morning we rode to the next village—about a two hour trip—where we found the same incredibly primitive living conditions. The young Peace Corps volunteers—including a girl in her 20's—were eager to move into the valley permanently. Last report I had was that Roy's efforts appeared to be finally bearing fruit because the Peace Corps brass seemed to be taking a more encouraging attitude toward working in the area and assigning personnel there.

■ **CLICK**

The last few frames on the film roll show me bidding a fond farewell to Roy Johnsen and Honduras—but as the Sahsa 737 took off, about an hour and a half late, I had the sudden impression that I wasn't going to leave all that easily.

When the airliner lifted off from Tegucigalpa, it suddenly made a 180 degree turn to the left, then within seconds we found ourselves right back on the ground. All manner of things ran through my mind before the reassuring announcement from the pilot that some minor mechanical trouble had been corrected and the flight would resume shortly.

■ **CLICK**

There's one more picture. It shows one Kent Furlow at a typewriter in his home back in Baton Rouge, while in the next room there's a faucet dripping away incessantly. The dripping is almost like a metronome, marking the time as my fingers hunt and peck their way around the keyboard.

Stange, that dripping is no longer the irritant it had been before I left. Instead, it's a reminder that the villagers I met in Honduras wouldn't mind it at all. They'd probably be glad to have plumbing of any kind. •

A word about Wings of Hope

By Joseph G. Fabick,
John Fabick Tractor Co.,
Fenton, Mo.

It was back in December of 1974 that AED Past President P.E. MacAllister took to his typewriter to tell the story—as only P.E. could—of Wings of Hope to the equipment industry in a CED article titled, “In the Christmas Spirit—Wings of Hope.” I don’t believe even P.E. himself realized at the time the eventual impact his article about this humanitarian organization would have.

He introduced Wings of Hope to AED members by recounting the story of how this non-profit, non-sectarian, non-political organization had been formed in 1962. It’s job, he wrote, is to help “the forgotten people” on four continents by acquiring airplanes to fly mercy missions of all kinds, and to provide self-help service.

Since P.E. told the story of Wings of Hope, literally dozens of pieces of used construction machinery, accessories, and cash have been contributed by distri-



butors from all parts of the U.S. Frequently, these AED members also have assisted in selling the donated machines, so that almost 100% of the market value of each donation has been turned over to Wings of Hope and put

directly to work helping the needy of the world in the field.

Today, for example, the Roy C. Wayne Memorial Aircraft is regularly serving the suffering, needy and forgotten people living in the jungles of Guatemala. The Furlow-Laughlin Memorial Aircraft—which Kent Furlow writes about in this latest CED article—is flying every day on humanitarian missions. It serves an agrarian resettlement program deep in the Patuca Valley of Honduras where no roads are available to reach the homesteaders and their new cooperative settlements.

These airplanes are just two reasons why we are grateful that so many AED members have made Wings of Hope the active expression of their humanitarian concern for the suffering and needy people in remote areas of our world. Together, we will continue with AED-member help to assist these “least of our brethren” to help themselves in isolated places on Wings of Hope...

Some years ago, a young and valiant Canadian volunteer nurse had this to say to supporters of Wings of Hope from her isolated medical outpost on the Peruvian Amazon: “If you only knew what the sound of your airplane means to us...”•

URGENT NEED!! YOUR EQUIPMENT

Wings of Hope is your humanitarian, aviation program assisting the needy and suffering in remote areas of our world. Become a vital part of our lifesaving, medical-rescue services to the forgotten people* Help us support sound development activities. Together we will bring health and hope to the hopeless.

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