

FOR INTERCOM EASTERN

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

79 - 41 OCTOBER 9, 1979



July 1, 1979 marked Roy Johnsen's first day back to duty, after a year's leave of absence, as General Aviation Operations Inspector at the Albany GADO. That year was spent in the remote areas of the Central American jungle of Honduras.

To appreciate why Roy would give up the conveniences of city life and go into the uncivilized valleys of Honduras, and to understand the type of work he performed during this time, one would have to know a bit about the organization he served--yes, served--for this was strictly a voluntary assignment.

"Wings of Hope" is a nonsectarian, non-profit and nonpolitical organization which operates in remote areas of the world (Alaska, Central and South America, Africa and New Guinea). It depends on professional aviation-oriented individuals who can pilot and maintain planes, as well as train the natives in these skills. It is a charity which utilizes airplanes to benefit mankind.

With 20 years of flying experience, Roy has flown every type of aircraft--from helicopters to aircraft carrier jet fighters, during the Vietnam War. It posed no problem, then, for Roy to

pilot the Cessna 185 from village to village in the Patuca Valley. The main airstrip was a 20-acre pasture in the middle of town. The cows and horses keep the grass cut, and 2 local natives keep the horses and cows clear of the strip during landings and takeoffs. On other strips the natives trim the grass with machetes. They are only too happy to please this man who flies the big, metal, silver bird into their village carrying supplies--medicines, food and tools--and who flies off with their sick and miraculously brings them back well again.

Roy recounts the story of an Indian family who traveled for 20 days through the jungle to find the large metal bird. Help was needed for the father who suffered from tropical ulcers and had already lost the use of his right arm. His left arm could barely raise the food to his mouth. To walk a short distance was an effort. His son, a boy of fifteen, suffering from malnutrition and bedeviled by parasites, hadn't the strength to carry him.

Roy found the family waiting on the airstrip when he arrived. The man could no longer stand and was sick with fever. As the plane taxied down the airstrip (the first step toward getting this helpless man to the hospital), he watched as his family fled in terror into the jungle to await his return. That was weeks later, but the "lung-deep holes" in his chest, once filled with banana leaves and native herbs were now healed. His left arm was completely functional and he could already feel the strength returning to his right arm.

There are numerous stories like this that Roy can tell, all more or less serious. The important thing is that

ROY JOHNSEN FLIES "WINGS OF HOPE"

(Continued from below)...there is hope, and there are people like Roy who offer their professional expertise to bring hope to the needy. Does he have any regrets? Only that more of his time couldn't be devoted to these people. His satisfaction--the smiling faces and the warmth he felt generating from these villagers. To better express Roy's feelings: "This place grows on you. But there are the realities of life to return to and there's only one of me."

'Profile' prepared by Patricia Calise.



Mail this coupon with your check and letter to:

Wings of Hope, Inc.
2319 Hampton Avenue • St. Louis, Mo. 63139
Phone: 314/647-5631

____ Please send more information on Wings of Hope.

____ Enclosed is my donation for _____

Name _____

Address _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (Area Code) _____

Charitable, Non-Profit, Non-Sectarian, Non-Political, Tax-Exempt