

WINGS OF WAR AND PEACE

Profiles of MAF pioneers.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to all those brave people who have served without counting the cost.

In PEACE, I think of tens of thousands of dedicated missionaries who knew they would die young.

In WAR I recognise the recipients of Britain's top award for valour, the Victoria Cross. I particularly think of four who I have had the privilege to meet.

Leonard Cheshire VC one of Britain's most famous pilots who saw the atom bomb being dropped at Nagasaki, whom I had the privilege of sitting beside at a dinner in London (I tell this story in my book **Beaufighter Over The Balkans**, pages 144-145)

Edwin Swales VC who was South Africa's only recipient of the VC. He gave his life in allowing all of the crew of his **Lancaster** time to bail out. I was one of Edwin's flying instructors .

Rambahadur Limbu VC was one of the many Gurkhas who received the Victoria Cross. They have the reputation of being amongst the bravest men of our time.

Havildar Lachiman Gurun VC, another Gurkha. I had the privilege of meeting these two VC's and shaking their hands when Joanna Lumley brought them to our Assembly Hall in Worthing, which was packed out with valiant servicemen.

Appreciation

These twelve profiles are from five countries in three continents.

My thanks go to their relatives, friends and to the various Mission Aviation Fellowship groups with whom they served.

My special thanks go to UK MAF retired pilot and safety officer David Staveley who has given so much of his time to this project by advising, editing and especially in providing the updates.

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Introduction

This book continues the story begun in my first two books, 'Beaufighter over the Balkans – from the Balkan Air Force to the Berlin Air Lift' which was about the war against tyranny in WWII and 'Early Wings over Africa' about the early days of MAF.

I chose as the title of this third book "Wings Of War And Peace" because all these pioneers, eleven men and one woman, from Britain, America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand had all been in the forces during World War II. I knew a lot about their work in Third World countries, but they were charmingly silent about their distinguished war records. Although I have personally known most of the men and the one woman described in these profiles, it came as a real eye-opener to me to learn how much they had distinguished themselves in the war. Five of these pioneers had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, two of them American DFCs. Three others, including myself, were awarded the British DFC. I had not realized either that one of our British Mission Aviation Fellowship pioneers had been awarded the Air Force Cross.

All of them could have written great books about their work with MAF in some of the 30 countries in which they served. These Profiles are an attempt to show what they were involved with in both war and peace. It was our wartime training and flying experiences that gave us the tenacity to overcome the huge challenges of flying for missions in peacetime. It is thrilling to know that so much for the benefit of mankind has been brought about by turning weapons of war into tools for the well-being of humanity.

This book features the pioneering days soon after the close of WWII, reaching into some of the remotest parts of our planet, where planes had never landed. What I have written is entirely about the work that we helped to found, and that currently operates about 130 aircraft in 30 of the remotest countries on earth. This is the MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP, which is sometimes referred to as 'God's Airline'.

1. BETTY GREENE.

A WWII Women's Airforce Service Pilot (WASP) who pioneered high stratosphere flying and jungle flying in three continents.

Betty's interest in flying began at the age of four, when her older brother told her how the flying controls worked as they were playing in the wrecked fuselage of an amphibious plane. That initial interest became focused when she was eight and her brother, Joe, made his first solo flight aged just fifteen. At sixteen she was given a birthday flight.

Soon after Betty learned to fly she began to dream about one day flying for Christian missions. In 1943 she joined the United States Air Force and became a pilot with the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). She did her initial training on what were known as PT19s and then moved onto 450 horsepower BT-15s, and later the North American AT-6 which she found to be a great experience, and then onto Cessna AT-17s.

Betty Greene's first assignment as a WASP pilot was to Camp Davis in North Carolina to fly with the Tow Target Squadron. Two WASP pilots were killed soon after Betty's arrival, one in a night flying accident, the other by sabotage. Sugar was found in one of the fuel tanks. One of the first planes she flew with the squadron was a single engine A-24 Dauntless. She then flew the twin engine Beech AT-11 on day and night tracking and searchlight missions.

For day and night target towing missions she flew B-34s. On her first night flight at 1,800 feet she suddenly saw bursts of light in clusters ahead of her. The gunners were shooting at her with live ammunition instead of at the target she was towing! On another occasion when flying at 10,000 feet on a radio tracking mission she saw puffs of dark smoke around her aircraft. It turned out that directly below her the gunners were firing at a target being towed by another plane.

It was in 1944 that she met Jim Truxton, a navy pilot, who introduced her to other navy pilots who shared their vision of planes being used in the remotest parts of this earth where surface travel was exceedingly difficult.

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On another occasion when flying at 10,000 feet on a radio tracking mission she saw puffs of dark smoke around her Dauntless it turned out that directly below her there was a target being towed by another plane, that the gunners were firing at.

After a spell with that towing squadron, Betty was posted to Wright Field in Ohio to be involved in high flying tests in four-engined Boeing B-17 bombers, the aircraft that had been especially built for breaking into the stratosphere. The thing that caused aviators most anxiety at that time was known as the "nemesis of Aeroembolism". Aeroembolism is the closing of blood vessels that occurs when flying at high altitudes. It was essential at this time in WWII to find out how to prevent embolism because German planes over Europe were beginning to fly higher and higher. There were no such things as pressurized cabins in those days. One experiment involved opening all windows and doors at 35,000 feet when the wind chill factor lowered the temperature to -56 degrees Centigrade.

A few days after her arrival at Wright Field, Betty was up at 35,000 feet. Even in a flying suit, with fur-lined boots and warm gloves, her hands and feet were still cold. One day they had to make a rapid descent because one of those on board had passed out. His oxygen mask had become disconnected. He came to when they got down to 20,000 feet. One of their experiments involved opening all windows and doors

Lives were lost during those days of research flying up in the stratosphere. One of their experiments involved opening all windows and doors at 35,000 feet when the wind chill factor was down to minus 56 degrees Centigrade. A USAF Colonel made an experimental parachute drop at 40,000 feet. He was to free fall to 20,000 feet before pulling his rip-cord. But he crashed to the ground with an unopened parachute. He must have passed out before he could pull his rip-cord. On another occasion a P-38 pilot was instructed to climb up to the Stratosphere and to make a test dive, which he did, but was unable to pull out of it and plunged to his death.

Betty Greene, in the book she began writing before her death, called: 'Flying High', wrote:
"Such problems were the real dangers associated with the exciting work of flight testing."

During her time as a WASP pilot, Betty flew many different types of planes, including a 2,400 horsepower P-47 pursuit fighter. She recalled that:

"The engine was so large that forward visibility was almost nil."

Betty also flew a C-60 Lodestar transporting paratroopers. Towards the end of her career in the WASPS, after others that she knew were killed, she wrote:

"As I thought about those who had died I was struck with the realization that in all my test flights I had been kept safe.

I knew that God had other plans for me and was thrilled to think that He would guide me into the unknown future."

Betty as a mission jungle pilot.

When Betty, Jim Truxton, Grady Parrott and others founded Mission Aviation Fellowship, she was ready for an assignment in any country. It was to be Mexico and Peru where she was seconded by MAF to fly for a fast-growing mission organisation called Wycliffe Bible Translators.

The Foreign Liquidation Commission's office for Latin America was a port of call to the Grumman Duck that had been bought, that she was soon expecting to fly. At the American Embassy at Lima she met General Ross Powell, chief of the navy air mission of the United States in Peru. The Duck had been under his command.

General Powell was very opposed to a woman flying the plane. He thought it was absurd to think of Betty flying the Duck, as for flying it over the Andes and navigating on treacherous tributaries of the Amazon River in the Peruvian rain forest. . . Betty felt flattened by General Powell, but undeterred she began flying the Duck, and became the first woman to fly over the Andes. Because of cloud and possible downdrafts, she took no chances and took the Duck up to 16,000 feet.

Betty flew over the Andes in that amphibian biplane a number of times with people and cargo from an interior base at Pucallpo to mission outposts on the Ucayali River and the river Tambo. Saving ten days or more over travelling by boat, the Grumman Duck had two cockpits and underneath a hold for cargo or passengers in a cramped space.

On one occasion Betty had a Peruvian military commander in the cockpit behind her and an official in the lower hold. They were flying in the northern part of Peru near a tributary of the Amazon, the Napo River, when the single engine spluttered and died. Betty was just able to make a dead-stick landing on a straight stretch of the river.

General Powell who had scoffed at a woman pilot must have been amazed that she survived during her year of pioneer flying for missions in Peru and a year in Mexico.

Africa next

NIGERIA

Betty's next assignment was to help the work of one of the largest mission societies in Africa, the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) as it was then called. Her time there took her north to the Sahara desert and south to the heavily-jungled Nigerian coast. Now Betty was flying two small planes, a Piper "Super Cruiser" and later a Cessna 170. It was Jim Truxton of MAF who had helped the SIM to start their own aviation arm in West Africa.

Clarence Soderberg was the first SIM pilot (in late 1946 or early 1947), before John Clay and Betty's arrival. "Soddy" was one of the early MAF visionaries, along with Jim Truxton and Jim Buyers. When the SIM needed another pilot to support their pilot, John Clay, it was Betty who accepted the challenge. She travelled 9,000 miles to get to Kano.

Being a woman pilot in Nigeria made Betty unique. She met the Sultan, sitting in his leopard skin draped regal chair, dressed in a white robe on a raised platform. She was also invited to the Emir's palace with all its pomp and ceremony. There she met some of his wives who were astonished that Betty was a pilot. Betty recalled that the Emir's fourth wife was tall, slender and beautiful. On parting she said to Betty:

"The next time I see one of those silver airplanes flying overhead I will think of you and remember our meeting."

Betty's Nigerian assignment came to an end in December 1952. She had had some close shaves with the sandstorms from the Sahara that darkened the sky up to 10,000 feet and reduced visibility to almost nil down on the ground during the time of the Harmattan season.

SUDAN

When I gave up flying our old de Havilland twin-engine Rapide biplane in the Sudan after suffering a detached retina. my friend Gordon Marshall took my place. By 1956 he needed a break from flying in that exhaustingly hot climate.

Once again Betty stepped in. Although Kay and I had heard of Betty Greene, we had not yet met her. However, en route to the Sudan she stayed with us in our large London house that at that time served as the British H.Q. for MAF. This is what she wrote in "Flying High" about our days together:

"I spent a happy three days in London with Steve and Kay Stevens. Steve represented MAF-UK as Home Secretary. The couple had come from South Africa where Steve had been a South African Air Force pilot during World War II. His work with MAF in Sudan was cut short due to a detached retina of the eye. To fill the need of a pilot, Gordon Marshall, also from South Africa and a close friend of the Stevens, joined the work in 1952. Gordon had also served in the South African Air Force during World War II and as a combat pilot in the Korean War. He was challenged by Steve to dedicate his talents to building God's

kingdom. Gordon came to Sudan and met and married a second-generation American missionary, Jean Maxwell. I greatly admired that wonderful couple."

There had been a ruling that no woman should be allowed to fly in the Sudan, but Stuart King managed to get that changed for Betty to fly there. It was Stuart and I who had set up MAF's first operation in Africa - in the Sudan - in 1950.

Betty began her flying in the Sudan, flying the Rapide, but soon afterwards we obtained our first modern plane – the much smaller Cessna 180. We needed two of them to replace the capacity of the Rapide and as soon as funds became available we obtained our second Cessna 180. Betty was now in Africa's largest country, flying over vast distances, and one day she flew for nine hours. She also flew into surrounding countries including Ethiopia. One day Betty was in Addis Ababa, when King Saud of Saudi Arabia arrived and was met by Emperor Haile Selassie, and she saw them reviewing the Emperor's crack guard.

The presence of Betty as a professional pilot in a man's world, had an unexpected impact. Senior Sudanese men began to treat her as one of them and not in the usual way that they treated women. On some occasions the men included her with them, but on others she was left with the women. Afterwards one of the men would apologise to her, saying: *"Change is coming slowly, but it is coming"*.

During Betty's two years in the Sudan with British MAF, the work of MAF began to take off. At the time of writing we have 50 aircraft in Africa. We are most grateful to Betty and the other American MAF men and women who have helped us over the years.

The American MAF grew in leaps and bounds, but we in Britain were struggling. Americans, living in such a huge country, quickly realized the value of travel by air, and restrictions on flying were kept to the minimum. They were safe and realistic. More and more Americans began to fly in small planes, often even owning their own planes. Because they could see the advantage of using planes in their own country, it was easier for them to grasp how planes could be a godsend in overseas countries and in Central and South America.

By contrast, here in Britain, the authorities became afraid of the dangers of too much flying in a small country with a high density of population. It was, I believe, the Flying Flea that triggered such concerns and caused flying restrictions to become so severe in Britain. I discussed this matter with the owner of this now very old plane that is based nearby at Shoreham airport and he agrees with me. The aviation authorities realized that if they did not introduce draconian methods to keep private flying to a minimum over the UK, the air would be swamped with tiny aircraft making the air unsafe.

That is one of the reasons why it was so hard for us to enable budding pilots for MAF to obtain commercial licences and it was equally hard to obtain aircraft engineering licences. This meant that British people have been deterred from flying. When I visited the MAF H.Q. at Fullerton airfield close to Los Angeles in the 1950's, I realized that there were more small aircraft on this one airfield than on the entire British register.

British people were so used to surface travel that it was hard for them to comprehend how much planes were needed in the third world. This meant that when Kay and I and our children came to England in 1953, knowing very few people in the UK, it was a struggle to get MAF off the ground. But I must leave this diversion for later in this book and get back to Betty Greene.

When Betty was not on overseas assignments, she and her pioneering MAF colleagues were building MAF into a highly technical flying organisation and exploring the world with a view of opening up more and more of the remotest parts of our planet. Many surveys were

conducted. Stuart King and I did a survey of the remotest mountainous parts of southern Ethiopia where it was very difficult to find level ground for airstrips. Grady Parrott, the president of the American MAF and I went to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to talk to mission leaders. That led to a survey to look for suitable airstrip sites.

NEW GUINEA

The American MAF, some time after her two years in the Sudan, asked Betty Greene if she would be willing to fly in New Guinea. Betty knew this was one of the most hazardous places for flying. Over the years we have lost more planes, pilots and passengers in the 'hidden valley' mountainous regions than anywhere on earth. The name 'hidden valleys' where so many remote stone age, people eked out a living was so named because so often they were covered with cloud that reached down covering the surrounding mountains. This made flying into these areas extremely dangerous, but as climbing up and over these mountains was virtually impossible; planes had to be used despite the dangers.

From the very earliest days, Stuart King and I knew how dangerous it was to fly in New Guinea. Harry Hartwig of Australian MAF had been killed there and also Al Lewis of American MAF. Betty arrived in New Guinea in July 1960. By this time the American MAF, in what was then Dutch New Guinea, and now Irian Jaya, had four planes.

Soon after our arrival in England in early 1954, before Stuart King and Phyllis and Gordon Marshall went back to the Sudan, Al, on his way to New Guinea, called us and we went to see him at his hotel in London to talk about flying. He was going to fly a Sealand. That sounded like too large a plane for tiny airstrips in much of New Guinea. But it was very successful in hauling in much heavier loads than our small MAF planes. But it was limited because it could not land and take-off from many of the 'Hidden Valley' airstrips.

A year later it was reported that Al and his Sealand had gone missing after flying into one of those 'hidden valleys'. It was a month before the wreckage was found on a mountain at 10,000 feet.

Betty was well aware that although she had faced many dangers in WASP flying and mission flying in two continents, that this, her third continent would be fraught with danger.

Just before she arrived, the Dutch Governor publicly recognised MAF's important contribution in opening up Dutch New Guinea. Governor Platteel conferred on the American MAF pilot David Steiger, the "Order of Orange Nassau". It was generally reserved for Dutch citizens, but Queen Juliana made an exception in bestowing the honour on MAF.

Betty, whose assignment was for one year, stayed on for 18 months, and by her skills and experiences in other parts of the world, survived the often rapid build up of clouds and storms that had taken the lives of others. She was particularly pleased to be able to help the work of missions to the 150,000 strong isolated Dani tribe, who in their droves were leaving their old ways of killing and were becoming fervent Christians.

Here in England and around the world, news came through that Michael Rockefeller, son of Nelson Rockefeller was missing in New Guinea. He and his companion Dr. Rene Wassing, who was an anthropologist, were on a relic collection expedition. They were trying to buy skulls and other artefacts from the coastal people who were known to be head-hunters.

Their sailing raft, a native catamaran, had capsized in heavy seas. Betty searched the area at 500 feet. Dr. Wassing was found on the capsized raft, but Michael had decided to swim for the shore. Betty flew Dr. Wassing all over that area, but Michael was never found.

Governor Rockefeller and Michael's twin sister flew from New York to join the search effort.

They personally expressed their appreciation for all Betty and others had done. In his letter to Betty the Governor wrote,

"When my daughter Mary and I left New Guinea we departed from the scene of an extraordinary experience - not only because we were searching for a son and a brother, but also because it is only rarely that one is given the opportunity to witness such devoted work as that which you are doing."

The Rockefeller tragedy received much media coverage around the world and MAF was given much credit, especially Betty, with headlines like: "Girl flier aids Rockefeller", "Betty Greene's Long Hours at the Controls", 'The Woman Pilot Who hunts for Rockefeller", "Lord is with her, Betty's safe", "Rockefeller Searcher's Parents Laud her Work".

Betty noticed that there was a positive Christian message in the articles, something, Betty said, that *"is rarely seen in the media"*.

George Boggs, a former MAF pilot said of Betty:

"Betty Greene had a dream of reaching the remotest places on earth for the Lord through the use of airplanes.... It was Betty Greene who gave me that first missionary pilot inspiration".

Betty Greene was the first woman pilot I ever met. I had served for ten years as a pilot with the South African Air Force and had never come across a woman pilot. I have only recently begun to meet other women pilots.

One day I had a phone call from one of Britain's most famous pilots, Connie Fricker. She had seen a double-page spread with photos of my flying days. It turned out that Connie, an elderly widow, was living in a flat only walking distance from us in South Woodford. When she opened the door to us on our first visit, Kay and I were amazed to see her flying awards. Framed citations hung on the hall wall and trophies were displayed in a large glass cabinet. She had won a certain competition not once, but three times.

It was at one of her birthday parties at Shoreham airport when I was asked to be the after dinner speaker that I came to meet many other women pilots. For most of my life, flying had been for me, a man's world.

Now, we have a few women pilots in the ranks of MAF. Betty paved the way for that. I had always thought that MAF flying was particularly a 'man's world' for it often meant lifting of heavy freight into and out of the planes. Betty, I am sure, would have been only too willing to do this too, but I suspect that men around would have rallied to her aid and said: "Betty, let me do that", leaving her with the role of supervisor in distributing the weight of freight suitably in the aircraft.

In my 17 years as British MAF Home Secretary and the Home Director in Britain, when I was out speaking in churches, schools and colleges, I was always on the look-out for suitable young fellows. I would always encourage those lads who came up to me at colleges and at university to join their university RAF Air Squadron to get their initial flying experience and then to contact me later on about further training. In those days, no girls ever came up to me about becoming pilots.

If I had met a young man and a young woman both equally well suited for MAF work, I would have always chosen the young man in preference to the young woman, not because I am a male chauvinist, and not just because men are physically stronger than women, but because I would fear that, after investing a great deal of time and effort in preparing a young lady for the role of an MAF pilot/engineer, she would then within a few years get married and have children and we would lose her in that chosen role.

This could so easily have happened to Betty. In her book she mentioned that a number of highly suitable men would have liked to have married her, and that she too would have liked to have been married and to have had children, but she deliberately chose the path of singleness so that she could adequately fulfil the task to which she felt God had called her.

Many other women have done the same thing. During my flying days in Africa, I met many delightful young missionary ladies, who, I am sure young men would have liked to have married, but they chose to forego marriage so they could continue to do the work they felt God wanted them to do. I salute such dedicated women.

2. NATE SAINT

US Army Air Corps airman in WWII and MAF pilot/engineer killed in 1956 by fierce Amazonian Indians.

Another WWII USAF airman who became a jungle pilot pioneer was Nate. His life was cut short when he and four other young missionaries made a daring attempt to reach a fierce Amazonian tribe by landing on the sandbar of a river. These unreached people mistook their intentions and killed them. The account of these five young men was flashed around the world at the time - in 1956. Much has been written about this amazing event and two films have recently been made.

Nate Saint was a great innovator who developed his inventive ability when he was just a boy. His interest in flying began when he was only seven. His older brother Sam, who was an airline pilot, took Nate into the air in an open cockpit plane. Later, Sam took ten-year old Nate up in another plane and taught him about the flying controls. With flying now in Nate's blood, he found a drawing in a magazine and built and flew a six foot glider. He then designed and built an eight-foot sailboat.

In 1941, when he was eighteen, he went to work at the Flying Dutchmen Air Service near Philadelphia. On June 16 he took his first flying lesson. Soon afterwards he bought a small airplane and his brother Sam, who by this time was an American Airlines captain who knew that Nate had a mechanical aptitude, helped him to find a job as an apprentice mechanic at LaGuardia Field.

Determined to obtain as much flying experience as possible, at 19 he renounced his draft free status, much to the annoyance of his employer, and after pulling many strings was accepted by the Air Corps. But there was one hitch. After a six-hour physical, his draft papers were marked "Accepted limited service" because of an attack of osteomyelitis five years earlier.

As Nate had still been classified A-1, he was enrolled in the Air Cadet Training Programme. With 50 others he came out top in written exams, but his hopes of flying with the Air Corps were dashed when, after a two-mile hike as part of their physical training, he noticed a reddening around the scar on his right leg. That spelt the end of a flying career with the Air Corps.

Nate was then transferred to Amarillo Field in Texas where he was put in charge of fifty men. Soon afterwards he was posted to Baer Field, Fort Wayne, where he was classified "Crew Chief, C-47". His card was stamped: "Disqualified for combat crew duty". Nate was forced to spend five weeks in hospital, but this seemed to be the last flare-up ever to develop.

In November 1944 Nate was sent to the Willow plant of the Ford Motor Company to study the characteristics of the latest aircraft engines being produced there. He later wrote to his Mother: *".....I'm very happily contemplating missionary training. The Lord clipped my wings"*.

When he returned to Baer Field he was sent an article by Ensign James C. Truxton, president of Christian Airmen's Missionary Fellowship (The original name of the American organization that was soon to change its name to the British name of Missionary Aviation Fellowship. A name that has stuck, except for dropping of the three letters 'ary'.)

The article "On Wings of the Wind" dealt with the formation of CAMF as a means of

serving missionaries in remote areas. It was Nate's first realization that such an organisation existed. He immediately contacted CAMF with his sights on becoming a pilot/engineer with CAMF. He bought an E-2 Cub to build up his hours.

At this time he wrote a letter in which he said: *"...Since throwing in my lot with CAMF, the past years of aero curiosity are beginning to make sense Selfish ambition is a dull and ungrateful pursuit!"*

MEXICO

After a time at Air Base at Salinas, California and then at Castle Field, Merced, Nate Saint was finally discharged from the Army in mid-February, 1946. His first assignment for CAMF was to go to Mexico to repair the Waco that Betty Greene was flying. On landing on a dog-leg at an auxiliary field at El Real, both left wings of the biplane, propeller and undercarriage had been damaged.

On arrival Nate soon began to understand the rigours of mission work. He was given a room with two doors. One at the front and another at the back. The doors were like stable doors, in two halves. To get some cool breeze he left them both open until one day a mule walked in one door and out the other!

The rafters were infested with scorpions, bats, cockroaches and rats. He was glad that his bed was covered with a mosquito net, especially when something that sounded as big as an eagle swooped past his net in the total darkness. It turned out to be a bat. He killed a couple of them. They smelt terrible and were full of lice.

"Needle-like teeth grinned through hideous faces" is what he said of them!

Charlie Mellis, another WWII USAF pilot, by then the secretary of CAMF wrote to Nate regularly and told him to keep a list of his expenses. The struggling CAMF had only been able to offer Nate fifty dollars a month for his repair work in Mexico.

Nate hoped to be able to get the WACO flying again in six weeks. The left wings were almost unrepairable.

He wrote to Charlie:

"I count it a rare privilege to be in on this deal because I believe that CAMF's future depends more than anything else right now on the repair and continued operation of the WACO".

When Charlie wrote to him about accounting procedures, Nate was ill and responded like this:

"When coping with bugs, no toilet facilities, linguistic prison, malarial climate, tropic heat, bad food, and so forth, forgive me, Charlie, I'm sure you get the point Today is my first up and around since the all-night-long attack of diarrhoea that left me so weak by 5 A.M. that I could only roll on the floor, calling for help....When lying in your own dung, only semi-conscious, linguistically dumb, please forgive me for not being, more explicit on the finances".

In the book "JUNGLE PILOT" - The Life and Witness of Nate Saint, one of the five missionaries martyred in the Ecuador jungle in 1956", the author Russell T. Hitt made this astute observation:

"He had learned firsthand about the hardships and had no illusions of what it could mean to be a missionary. He had learned something about the need for undertaking a difficult, thankless task under unpleasant circumstances. But most of all he had learned something about the discipline of patience.

These were all-important lessons for an Army veteran turned missionary soldier, and this Mexican experience established a new milestone in missionary aviation.

Nate demonstrated in Mexico his unique mechanical ability in making repairs to a plane that would have been difficult enough in a completely equipped hangar in the States. But it was more than a personal victory for Nate.

His experiences pointed up the fact that more than flying ability was needed in missionary aviation. Nate and his CAMF colleagues were convinced that henceforth missionary aviation demanded pilots with mechanical training or qualified mechanics who had learned to fly. Missionary flying was for specialists who would serve missionaries, not for missionaries who could make flying a side line."

Nate Saint became convinced that to work for missions in the remote parts of the world it was not enough to be a good pilot/mechanic, so on his return to the US he enrolled at the famous Wheaton College. His single year of college began January 28, 1947.

By this time Nate was wooing Marj, a nurse who felt as he did about missions. It took him time to be sure that Marj was right for him. But when he was absolutely sure he wrote to her:

"The fog is thinning out and my heart tells me the story I love you. My heart has been singing that song all along but my head was off pitch for a while. I know that it is love ...the realist, deepest kind a fellow can know. It is a wonderful thing this love".

When they were married, Nate had engraved on Marj's wedding ring the words from Psalm 34.3. *"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together".*

ECUADOR

They were married on Valentine's Day 1948 and MAF (as CAMF was by then called) decided that the place for them was Ecuador. After visiting churches, friends and other groups with a view of them being supported financially and prayerfully for their time in Ecuador, Nate wrote a letter in which he said:

"Our job is not to compete with existing airlines, nor are we expecting the airplane to usher in a golden age for the missionaries, but rather that it will be used as a tool that will let them push ahead more effectively. Our responsibility is to harness aviation to the needs of the mission field".

Soon after commencing their pioneering aviation work in a remote part of Ecuador close to the jungles of the Amazon they were told by a missionary about the tribe then called the Aucas, the name reflecting their reputation as killers. Nate and other missionaries longed to reach them. They made initial contact with them by air drops and then by landing on a river sandbar. There they made face-to-face friendly contact with some Aucas who came to visit them.

A fully illustrated account of Nate and his four missionary colleagues finding and then landing amongst the Auca Indians (now called by their true name, Waodani) and then being killed is fully covered with many photographs and the question – why? why? why... did they kill those five missionaries - and much more appears in the last chapter as the climax of my 2010 book: **Early Wings Over Africa.**

This profile is the story of just one of a number who used their WWII experiences and training to benefit - not to kill - mankind.

3. CHARLIE MELLIS DFC

Survived 32 FLYING FORTRESS missions over Europe in WWII. He opened up what was then known as Dutch New Guinea for MAF in 1952, involving mountainous jungle flying, but died suddenly in 1981.

Charlie Mellis began to learn to fly in July 1940 when he was 19. He went to Wheaton College, but left in early 1943 to enlist in the U.S. Army Air Corps, which was soon to become the U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF).

In January of the following year, Charlie began his training as a pilot on B-17s which we know as Flying Fortresses, the most famous American heavy bomber of World War II. It was born out of the strategists' plea for an aircraft that could destroy targets deep into enemy territory and fight its way out again, independent of allied escort cover.

The Flying Fortress had two faults. It could only carry half the bomb load of the Lancaster and it lacked firepower for head-on attacks. Nazi fighter pilots soon discovered this weakness and successfully exploited it. They made head-on attacks and held their fire until they could fire very accurately. At close quarters, a couple of short sharp bursts were all that was needed to destroy the pilot's cabin and kill the pilots.

To counter this weakness, Colonel Curtis LeMay, who later became a general, devised the plan of uniting three 18-aircraft formations into three close-knit groups, high, centre and low, to make it extremely difficult for Nazi fighters to shoot them down. Col. LeMay also introduced a pilot-controlled 'chin turret' just under the Fortress nose. These three formations of 54 Fortresses could between them bring a total of 704 heavy machine guns into action against any enemy fighters that dared attack them. Despite this massive firepower brave, daring Luftwaffe pilots with nerve and skill would still come in head-on and the losses mounted.

When Charlie had completed his B-17 training he was sent to England as a co-pilot for a combat tour with the 8th Air Force, with 603 squadron of the 398th Bomb Group. On June 20 he flew the first of his 32 combat missions over Europe. By the 27th September 1944 he had flown 240 combat hours and was awarded the US DFC. From the record of Charlie's Flying Fortress bombing missions in his pilot's logbook, we can see that 22 of them were over Germany.

For three days in a row their target was Munich. Among the better-known places were Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Cologne, Stuttgart, and Kiel, and nine were in France, including Versailles and Toulouse. Only one was to Holland, to Eindhoven. This was the time of 1,000 bomber raids and a time of heavy losses. The US lost 79,000 airmen over Europe.

Six months before Charlie began his flying missions, the famous American General Carl Spaatz, nicknamed 'Tooe', became the Commander of the US Strategic Air Force in Europe, to work closely with the RAF in the combined bombing offensive in Europe. Tooe had been the commander of a US Army Air Corps Squadron in France in WWI, and after directing air operations against Japan; he later became Chief of Staff of the new independent United States Air Force. Following the orders of General Spaatz, Charlie and his colleagues were involved in ground support and in destroying V-weapon sites. These bombing missions were also successful in cutting German petroleum production in March of 1944 from 940,000 tons to almost nothing by the autumn.

During September when Charlie flew his last eight missions, 'Bomber' Harris turned his attention back to cities. By then Barnes Wallis had designed a 10-ton 'earthquake' bomb,

codenamed the 'Grand Slam' but there was no plane yet that could carry it. However, a smaller 6 ton bomb was designed and used to great effect and code-named, 'Tallboy'. It was used with spectacular effect on railway tunnels, U-boat pens and on the battleship Tirpitz.

On reflection I am so sorry that Charlie and I did not share our WWII experiences when we were together in our home at MAF HQ in the late 50s, and again when we were with Charlie and Claire and their boys in 1970 in California.

That Charlie survived 32 missions over enemy territory is remarkable. Around that time bomber crews averaged only nine missions before being shot down. I am not surprised that he was awarded the American DFC. In going through some WWII flying books, I found something about the events of the 24th and 25th of July, when on both those days Charlie's target was Saint-Lo in France. It was the beginning of the U.S.A. Operation Cobra, when a huge tonnage of bombs was to be dropped on the German defenses by over 21,000 American bombers.

Unfortunately it was a small confined area and the US military forces were very close and quite a large number of bombs killed many of the US military. The account is to be found in Robin Neilland's great 400-page book: 'The Bomber War'. Here are a few of the facts from what Jack Capell, a radio wireman in the US 4th Infantry Division, had to say about the bombs that fell on them.

"My regiment was spearheaded for the attack...Visibility was bad that day and some bombs fell on our positions. Some bombers hit the Nazi defenses to our front, right on time and on target... I was watching from my foxhole and I got out to have a better view. Then a bomb fell on my field and knocked me off my feet. I got back in my hole fast. Soon the earth looked like the surface of the moon, but our 'B' Company advanced and we all followed."

That was not an isolated incident. I recall just before the end of the War in Europe when I was leading a section of rocket-firing Beaufighters deep into Yugoslavia as it was then called, that low cloud prevented us from reaching our target. Then, on our low-level return just over the tree tops, I suddenly saw tanks ahead of us and called the other pilots in my section to attack. With our thumbs on our rocket-firing button and within seconds of the attack it flashed into my mind that they might be allied tanks who were advancing far ahead of our expectations. Frantically, I called off the attack and as we flew over the tanks a few seconds later we saw a New Zealand flag. The horror of what I so nearly did still affects me. The whole story is told in my book 'Beaufighters Over the Balkans'.

Charlie Mellis wrote about the mission on the 24th in his combat diary:

"... Bombing just ahead of our troops South of St. Lo. Went in at 16,000, but the clouds were so bad we didn't drop any bombs. That was very discouraging, but not so bad as one of our squadrons that dropped on our own troops. That was plenty bad! There was hardly any flak over the target – our artillery was engaging their batteries, and they really did a good job"

US MAF SECRETARY

Much as Charlie would have liked to have been flying for mission in some overseas country, his role as Secretary of MAF meant that his task was to lay a sound foundation of support for MAF in North America. This was for the initial work of American MAF in South America where the needs were so obvious in that subcontinent with its high mountains and

the massive jungles of the Amazon.

By 1952 the American MAF had also begun work half way around the world in one of the most needy places in the entire world - New Guinea.

GRADY PARROTT

One of the early MAF pioneers from America who contributed so much to laying the foundations of this new missionary enterprise was Grady Parrott who soon became the MAF US President. I am not writing a profile about him, because these profiles are only of those who served with the military. Grady was indirectly involved with WWII because as a flying instructor he taught many USAAF and USAF men to fly. So, instead of a separate profile on him, I'll mention him here.

Of all the MAF US men, it was Grady and his wife Maurine that my wife Kay and I knew best. When passing through England, they would stay with us for a few days. Then when we visited America, to meet up with US MAF leaders, we would stay with the Parrotts in their home in greater Los Angeles.

Grady too, was deeply involved with working out MAF strategy. This strategy was not just worked out in the US MAF office, but it emerged because Grady became one of the early pioneer MAF pilot/administrators in New Guinea. Just as Stuart King and I had to formulate a policy in the Sudan in 1950 as we gained experience in operating our first MAF plane in Africa, so Grady went through the same pioneering process in New Guinea. How I wish, when we were planning for our initial work in Africa, we could have thought it through as well as he did, but we were not in much contact with each other in those days.

I will quote some extracts from Grady Parrott's letter, dated October 15, 1952, that he wrote to MAF's constituency in the States in which he outlined the usual procedure for establishing an MAF program:

"Following a request for service in a given area, MAF first goes in for an on the spot survey. This survey must establish the need and practicability of an air-aid program. A closely calculated rate per mile is determined to cover plane operating costs. Assuming a decision is reached for air assistance, MAF then moves to establish a service tailored to meet the field problems.

We look for the Lord's provision of necessary funds. There's the matter of capital outlay - the plane, radio, shop, house and hangar. Support for the MAF pilot and his family will be needed. Problems sometimes arise causing delay and extra expense (government negotiations, etc.), but in the providence of God a new air operation is soon in action, and the Gospel moves ahead.

As flights are made for the missionaries, they pay into the plane fund according to the established mileage rate. This plane fund remains a permanent part of that particular field program. From it the plane's operating expenses are paid.

Since the calculated mileage rate covers not only running costs (fuel, maintenance, insurance, etc.), but also includes depreciation on the plane itself, it follows that the more the plane is pressed into service, the more reserve is proportionately built up toward its ultimate replacement. That means that once the Christian people have put a plane on the field through MAF, it becomes a self-sustaining unit from there on out. This self-replacement feature means good equipment for dependable, continuous service. In hazardous areas that's an important consideration.

You see, the same funds that the missionaries would otherwise spend for mule hire and

feed, and for native carriers and canoes, are now diverted to the faster, more efficient air transportation. Incidentally, the mileage rate does not include the MAF pilot's allowance, nor anything for MAF's headquarters which institutes and directs the various programs. Those costs are taken care of through gifts of individuals and Christian groups who wish a part with us in this pioneer advance."

NEW GUINEA

By the time Grady made this statement, which is more or less how MAF functions worldwide today with certain modifications for different countries, Charlie and Claire, with their little sons were in New Guinea themselves.

Although Charlie was flying for MAF to a certain extent, his main role was on the administrative side for which he was well qualified from his role in America as US MAF Secretary. It is interesting to note that during Charlie's tenure with MAF he served, at one time or another, in all four corporate leadership positions (Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, and President), finally retiring from MAF in 1973 as the organization's third president. To date, he remains the only person in US MAF to have held all four positions.

At this time MAF US with Australian MAF were only working in the eastern half of the island which was under mandate to the Australians. But they knew that there was a tremendous need for MAF to operate in the western half also. It was Charlie who opened that door and it was a very delicate task that called for tactful diplomacy. Charlie's presence as an American was welcome in Dutch New Guinea because it was the Americans that had liberated New Guinea during WWII from the take-over by the Japanese. In fact General McArthur the famous American General had his H.Q. in Dutch New Guinea.

The Dutch, as a colonial power, were not all that welcome there. The local people did not want a pre-war colonial power to remain as a post-war colonial power. The people were enthusiastic about a plane to help medically and in many other ways that would reach into mountainous jungle areas but they also had reservations. Would such a plane bring with it the colonial powers to exercise their control, which at that time they could not enforce because of the extreme difficulties of penetrating those deep valleys where many of what could be termed 'Stone Age people' lived in complete isolation from the outside world?

But Charlie was welcomed with open arms by both the local people and the colonial powers, and his diplomatic skills were put to good use.

In 1950 in the Sudan, Stuart King and I did not face that dilemma. The Southern Sudanese did not oppose colonialism. In fact they welcomed it, because it was the British colonialism that had brought an end to slavery, which was to raise its ugly head once more when the British left and MAF and foreign missionaries were thrown out by the Khartoum Government.

Colonialism is a dirty word today, but it was not all bad, far from it. In the Sudan especially, from where I was able to make on-the-spot observations, it was good. Very good!

Charlie, together with his wife, Claire, did great work in New Guinea in 1952. They returned to America for a while, and before going back to New Guinea again with their four sons, they stayed with us at our home in South Woodford, London, that we had been able to purchase miraculously for a very low price when we had so little money, and when MAF could barely survive on the small amount of money that was coming in from supporters.

I will not write much more about Charlie and Claire in New Guinea as two more of my Australian MAF profiles are related to New Guinea, but I will just touch on one relevant incident that was taking place at the very time of Charlie's arrival in Dutch New Guinea.

An American missionary couple had just set-off with carriers, to penetrate the jungles and climb mountain range after mountain range to get to one of the most isolated places on earth where large numbers of aboriginal people were living. With the advent of two-way radio, which we did not have in the Sudan two years earlier, they were able to report their progress. They estimated that it would take them two hard weeks of slogging through jungle and up and down mountain ranges to get to their destination. It was their real life story of day to day difficulties, happening at the very time, that reinforced Charlie's determination to set up an air service in Dutch New Guinea and lent weight to all his discussions with the Dutch New Guinea authorities, which greatly helped to clinch matters in favour of permission for an MAF air service to be established there.

MAF-USA OPERATIONS UPDATE

Within a few years of the beginning of the worldwide operations of MAF, it was apparent that the MAF-USA group possessed greater resources than the smaller British and Australian groups. This meant that the American group were able to lend personnel to these two smaller groups thus enabling them to start programmes of their own in both Africa and the western Pacific. In addition MAF-USA were still able to develop new programmes alongside their existing Central and South American operations. Right from the start this fostered good co-operation between the three MAF groups and lessons learned in one area of operation were successfully transferred into many other areas worldwide.

Unique amongst the MAF groups was MAF-USA's original insistence that all MAF pilots should also have an aircraft technician's licence. This enabled a MAF pilot at an isolated location to be virtually self contained in his flying programme where local regulations permitted. This often allowed a greater flexibility in the flight operations so resources could be concentrated in areas of particular physical or spiritual need at short notice. However, the recent growth of more detailed aviation legislation in many developing countries may restrict this option for MAF in future years

MAF-USA has also been able to oversee the development of national MAF groups in some of the countries where they have been operating. Aviation in countries like Mexico and Brazil has grown rapidly in the last half-century and these national groups have taken over much or all of the running of their MAF programmes. Recruitment and training of national pilots and engineers has also developed with many of the original MAF-USA instructors being phased out as national instructors have taken over.

An exciting 21st Century development has been the new Kodiak aircraft with which MAF-USA has been involved. This 10 seat turbine aircraft, produced by the Quest Aircraft Company of the USA is a genuine short take-off and landing (STOL) aircraft targeted at bush flying in developing countries. Early indications are that the Kodiak could play a key role in the development of mission aviation in the future. Previous attempts to develop aircraft specifically for mission aviation have proved less than successful – not necessarily because of poor design but because the designs lacked the wider commercial market needed to bring the costs within the reach of mission organisations. By contrast, the Kodiak seems to have secured a significantly wider interest amongst operators in many diverse areas of the world.

4. Stuart King

His story.

I was born in London in 1922, the youngest of three children. My father had recently left the Army after 26 years of service including India and the Middle East. He was soon to be in charge of one of the first long range worldwide Radio Beam Stations in Somerset. In the Army he had been one of the first members of the newly inaugurated Royal corps of Signals. So, when I was five, we moved to Somerset.

The Beam Station consisted of very high masts covering a very large area and was very much out in the country. As a result of this, there was actually no school for me, so my mother taught me. I finally went to school when I was about nine when we later moved to Reading. Two years later, due to my father's continuing promotions, we moved to Hereford where I went to Hereford High School.

When I was 15, my father was transferred to Cardiff and I started to study for an Engineering Degree in the College and University there. I had always been fascinated by aircraft since I was very young and wanted to train for aircraft design.

World War Two started soon after and, at 19, I volunteered for the RAF. I had been in the Cardiff University Air Squadron and hoped to train as a pilot. However, since I had then acquired my Engineering degree, the RAF commissioned me as an Engineering Officer. In that capacity I served for a little over two years on light bomber Operational Training Units with Blenheims, Bostons, Mitchells and Mosquitoes.

I then applied for a more frontline position and was soon sent as Squadron Engineer Officer to a ground- support fighter squadron. 247 Squadron was equipped with Hawker Typhoon aircraft. The single-seater Typhoons were formidable planes. The blunt nose cowling housed a 36 litre, 24 cylinder Napier Sabre engine of 2200 horse power. There was an enormous air intake at the bottom of the cowling behind the big four-bladed propeller. The plane had four 20mm cannons. Then there were the eight lethal rockets mounted on rails beneath the wings. Each rocket was seven feet long with a heavy armour-piercing explosive head. Every inch of the Typhoons and its armament was aggressive.

The Typhoon was one of the fastest low-level fighters of the war. But its greatest reputation was as a ground attack fighter. It destroyed countless enemy guns, transport vehicles, supply trains and tanks. It played a decisive part in the battle of Normandy.

From the time D-Day, for the invasion of France in 1944, was announced there was an air of mingled excitement, apprehension and sometimes of professed indifference among us. From the moment we had painted the black and white stripes on the bodies and wings of our aircraft, to ensure they would be recognised and not shot down by our forces, tension had been mounting.

The beachhead landings, which were to go on for several weeks, started on 6th June. 247 Squadron had already carried out its first attacks against German tanks on the Normandy beachhead by flying across the Channel from our airfield in southern England. Reports came of the initial beach landings. The commandos had gone in, RAF commandos among them, helping to prepare for our own Squadron's arrival. Their casualties were heavy.

Then came our turn to pull down the tents in which we had been living and to head for Portsmouth and the landing ships. Our long line of vehicles, men and equipment stood in the streets leading to the dockside. The local people crowded out of their houses around us. They brought us tea and milk and food. They too sensed the tension. They knew the dangers. They knew some would never come back.

Our flotilla of landing craft, with its Navy escort, sailed through the night towards

Normandy. As dawn came we could begin to see the coastline ahead of us. The early morning light was murky with smoke. Through the haze the flat beach at Courseilles-sur-Mer lay ahead of us, drab and hostile, rising into grass-tufted sand dunes beyond. The enemy was there.

Along that smoke-filled coastline lay our own battleships, destroyers and frigates. Above them floated hundreds of squat grey barrage balloons, their defensive cables tied to the warships below. German aircraft were diving on the ships. Noise was continuous: the roar of aircraft, the bursting of bombs, the crackle of machine-guns and the barking "woof" of anti-aircraft fire.

We had been carefully briefed with accurate photographs of that whole shoreline. It was vital that we should know what our situation would look like. But, of course, the photos taken by our submarines beforehand had shown an empty quiet scene, devoid of action. Now the coastline was there in front of us, clearly recognisable - but how different from the briefing photographs. It was full of the sight and sounds of ships, of aircraft, of military transport and of fighting men.

Our small landing craft edged to the shore. We clambered into our vehicles and prepared to beach them, then to drive our line of trucks, jeeps, men, maintenance spares up through the surf onto the beach and then onto the fields of Normandy beyond.

The flat bow of our landing craft dropped down to form a ramp into the sea. Engaging a four-wheel drive, we edged over the ramp and through the shallow waters. We clawed our way up onto the soft sand of the dunes beyond. The trucks rumbled out behind us. The fighting went on around us.

An advance construction unit had already laid down a heavy wire matting landing strip in one of the fields. We located this, set up our tents a little distance away and unloaded our trucks. Although we were fortunate to hit no mines, there were other harsh realities with fierce fighting, bombing and sniping going on all around. A Messerschmitt 109 came roaring low over our site. It was being chased by a Spitfire. Anti-aircraft fire from our own army units was blotching the sky with angry black low-level clouds of bursting gunfire. I saw the first plane shot down after our arrival. It wasn't the enemy 109 - it was the RAF Spitfire. And it was our own anti-aircraft fire that had mistakenly blown it from the sky.

Such was the turmoil of those first few days. There was the intensity of highly co-ordinated action as well as the occasional confusion. The front line was very close. A Royal Navy battleship was firing its powerful 16-inch guns from the sea over our heads into the enemy positions. One landed short and fell near our tents. By the grace of God it did not explode.

About our second day in Normandy I stood by our airstrip. Two of our Engineer Officers were driving our jeep along it to inspect it. Suddenly a hedgehopping Messerschmitt appeared behind them, firing as it came. The jeep carried on rolling down the runway - on its own!! Both the officers had hurled themselves out of it into the long grass at the side of the strip. Both were unhurt. The Messerschmitt roared on. The jeep trundled into the rough ground and stopped as the engine stalled.

One day we talked with men from a Canadian tank unit in our area. Theirs was an unenviable position. The German tanks had longer-range guns and could hit them before they could get within range to hit back. So, they had to fight against murderous odds. On another day, soon after our arrival, I watched the CO of a unit of the South Wales Borderers briefing and encouraging a small group of these tense and weary men. Casualties had been horrendous but the fighting had to go on. There was a shortage of water, an epidemic of jippy tummy and dust everywhere.

There were accidents on (and just off) the airstrip. On one occasion, one of our Canadian Typhoon pilots was hit in the leg on an operation and spun in on his landing approach. He collided with three of 247's rocket armed aircraft near the end of the runway on readiness, writing them all off in the process. Amidst rockets whizzing about in all directions, the pilot was pulled out of the blazing wreck of his own aircraft. As a result this pilot survived the war of which, I hear, he never spoke.

A most bizarre day was when German MEs tried to shoot us up. The same day an American Lockheed Lightning chased an American Mustang around our airfield and shot it down by our dispersal (even the ground crew could recognise the aircraft). Then came the unbelievable sight of an abandoned American Liberator. The whole crew had had to bale out. We watched, fascinated, as the giant plane climbed, side slipped and dived in a crazy frenzy of aerobatics, against the background of the white descending parachutes, before plunging to earth near the airfield.

We were very close to the German army at this time and for some time afterwards. Our own artillery was shelling them from our airstrip and there were times when we had to change from flying left circuits to right to avoid artillery fire. Once we were so heavily shelled by German artillery that our aircraft had to return to the UK. They left with shells bursting on the airfield. The ground crew had to stay. The planes returned five days later, this time to stay.

During this period of very close army support the trips were short, often only about 20 to 30 minutes. Flak was prolific, especially the light stuff which was hosed at our aircraft. Many planes and pilots were lost. Sortie after sortie was flown. Some of our own pilots were shot out of the skies almost over our own heads as they attacked the front line targets. Our Squadron's task was to knock out those deadly Panzer tanks.

Our aircraft had to make intensely dangerous low-level attacks against relentless anti-aircraft fire. Our pilots had to keep their plane's nose down on to the enemy tanks beneath them. The very planes and their rockets had to be aimed exactly at the target: these were not the guided missiles of today. When released the rockets would leap with fierce hissing from their rails to streak down onto their target, crash devastatingly through the sides of the tank and explode inside. By then the Typhoons themselves would be perilously low and the pilots had to pull up, sometimes at maximum 'G' to break away from action. All the time they were vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire.

I remember a young 18-year-old pilot - he looked fresh out of school. He had only a minimum of training. Within hours of his arrival on the Squadron the lonely looking lad was strapped into his massive Typhoon. He was off on his first sortie, projected so suddenly into the low-level arena of air-to ground warfare. As he came into land afterwards, concentrating on bringing the heavy aircraft back to earth safely, he forgot to lower his undercarriage. The Typhoon, itself something like a flying tank, ploughed into the wire mesh of the runway, tearing it up. The Squadron Leader was livid. The young pilot got a roasting. I saw his Flight Commander trying to encourage him later. On a sortie the next day he didn't come back: shot down after only two days of agonising action.

I stood one day watching our CO's plane above our airstrip. The end of one of its wings had been shot away by anti-aircraft fire. The CO was trying to bale out, but every time he slowed down the plane started rolling drunkenly because of this damage. Finally, he did manage to get out but got tangled in his parachute. In the end he just made it safely to the ground. He was livid that time, too, but it was the parachute packer who was 'on the mat' then.

There was scarcely a quiet moment day or night. We worked in close co-operation with the

Army and very effectively it seems, for on one such day the Army credited us with no less than 25 tanks destroyed. These days were not without cost of course. In those first three hazardous months our Wing of four squadrons lost 150 pilots.

So our operations continued from those dusty summer fields of Normandy. For almost two months we were pinned down in that narrow beachhead. Then, supported by aerial bombardment, the Allied troops finally began a breakout from the hemmed-in strip of coastline. As the front line advanced our squadron leapfrogged from airstrip to airstrip. We were still bombed, strafed and sniped at by the enemy. But we moved through France into Belgium.

When we arrived at our airstrip just outside Brussels, the convoy was scarcely recognisable. We had driven through the centre of Brussels and found that we were the first of the Allied forces to enter the city. The citizens were wild with joy and, while they were booing trucks of German prisoners being taken away, they were cheering our own men as we came in. Soon, flags and flowers covered our convoy. By the time we had arrived at our airstrip our men were loaded with all kinds of fruits - grapes, pears, peaches, greengages and other delightful things. As we unloaded our tents, crowds of Boy Scouts rushed to help us erect them and unpack our kit. Children rushed off to the village for hot water. They returned not only with hot water but also with fruit and eggs.

That evening we went back into Brussels and found the people thronging the streets, singing songs - mostly English ones and cramming the cafe's, singing and dancing. We were literally grabbed by the citizens and hustled off in groups to the cafes - and some to night clubs. Whenever we entered a cafe, without fail, an orchestra would strike up with 'It's a long way to Tipperary', or the British National Anthem.

However, the war had to go on and, after leaving Belgium, we raced to get our Squadron to Holland to support the ill-fated airborne landings at Arnhem. On that journey my convoy and I mistakenly strayed across the ever-moving battlefield into the enemy lines. By the grace of God, we were able to extricate ourselves unscathed. Near Arnhem we found the sky thick with RAF transport planes trying to drop supplies to the beleaguered bridgehead, thick also with assaulting German fighter aircraft. Our own Typhoons joined in.

We stayed in the Netherlands for some months. As dawn broke on 1st January 1945, I was already out seeing to the early morning preparations of our squadron. Suddenly some words from the Bible unexpectedly flashed through my mind.

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them".

At the same moment dozens of German Focke-Wulf fighters came diving across our airfield with blazing guns and roaring cannon.

They swept back and forth low above us raking everything with fire. Our own planes had no chance of taking off. Together with my Flight Sergeant I threw myself to the ground. We lay flat on our stomachs next to our little wooden dispersal hut. A Focke-Wulf cannon shell splintered through its timbers two feet above my head. Around us the whole airfield was in chaos, smoke rising, planes full of holes, transport vehicles ablaze. The smell of burning oil filled the air. As soon as the attacking planes disappeared we rushed to get the injured to hospital. A few of our maintenance staff were among them, some already dying.

This was the Luftwaffe's last throw. Their fuel supplies exhausted, they were virtually grounded. With supremacy in the skies the Allies moved northwards into Germany, crossing the Rhine. Five months later the war in Europe ended.

As we drove deeper into Germany we often passed lines and lines of displaced people, often pushing small carts with all their belongings, sometimes bearing a little national flag.

They were trying to walk back to their homelands from which they had had been taken as slave labour. The sight was often pathetic and heart rendering as we passed group after group.

We actually found ourselves driving by the Belsen concentration camp on the very day of its liberation. Unbelievably emaciated men and women with dirty ragged striped camp clothing were staggering out to look for food. It was a ghastly contrast to the well dressed and well fed Germans around.

VE day came while we were in Germany. We ended up in Germany in the far north, at Lubeck.

After VE day I volunteered to go the Far East. Shortly afterwards our whole squadron was told it would re-equip for the Far East. We returned to England and re-equipped with Hawker Tempest aircraft. However, VJ day came, so all that was cancelled!

Shortly afterwards, I was posted as Chief Technical Officer to Duxford, the location for the filming of the "Battle of Britain" film. We had two Spitfire Squadrons there at that time.

In November 1946 I was de-mobbed, but soon after had a letter from the Air Ministry offering me a much-prized permanent commission in the RAF. This left me facing three options for my future: to continue with the RAF (an attractive proposition); or to take up the offer of post-graduate aeronautical studies at the newly formed Cranfield College of Aeronautics; or finally to join the relatively unknown venture MAF, which a few of us from the Air Force were investigating.

God made it clear that I should chose MAF.

A new phase opened in my life. My book, **Hope Has Wings**, details the story, I summarise it in the next few paragraphs.

After leaving the RAF, I obtained a couple of the several available civil aviation licenses. Then I flew with Jack Hemmings in our first MAF aircraft to Africa to make an extensive survey of large areas of eastern, central and some western parts of Africa.

Two years later, in 1950 we flew a ten-seater twin-engine aircraft to the Sudan. Steve Stevens came up from South Africa and we started an air service based in the needy south. Through the next 15 years our work expanded into Ethiopia, Kenya and Chad and later into Tanzania and Uganda. I became largely responsible for the strategic direction before I retired in 1986. During that time we had continual interaction between the different MAF groups worldwide. We also began to develop more and more ties with groups in Europe who were interested in supporting MAF.

Since retirement I've had the privilege of continual involvement in MAF UK, MAF Europe and MAF International. I am so grateful to God not only to have been present from the start of the work, but also to see how it has expanded to the worldwide organisation it is today.

MISSIONARY AVIATION FELLOWSHIP (Now Mission Aviation Fellowship)

Those of us in the Airforces of the world had experienced the aeroplane as a powerful instrument of death and destruction - mainly in our developed countries. MAF began as a vision to use aircraft instead to bring life and help to the world's most needy people in undeveloped lands.

Stuart King's book "**Hope Has Wings**", tells the amazing story of MAF from its tiny beginnings. It tells how it has become, often through pain and trauma, the effective worldwide organisation it is today – and through God's grace a blessing to thousands and thousands!

5. JACK HEMMINGS AFC

His account:

In August 1940 I was 19 years old and volunteered for aircrew. Five months later I was kitted out and sent to Babbacombe for square-bashing. It was then on to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, for initial training, after which half of us put our kit bags on our shoulders and marched down to Marshall's Flying School whilst the other half went to some transit camp and then took ship to South Africa.

At Marshall's we were introduced to the Tiger Moth and for six weeks of perfect weather enjoyed half of each day in lectures and the other half in the air. Selection tests had put me in the multi-engine (plodding) stream, not in the single engine (dashing) stream. Hence the next stage was at Little Risington to learn to fly Airspeed Oxfords. The jump from open cockpit biplanes to cabin twins was, to me, a bit demanding.

I didn't take to the Oxfords, possibly because of a nasty experience doing circuits and bumps at night. Turning left after climb-out I glanced over my shoulder to check position relative to the flarepath... and I could see no flarepath. Whether a patch of cloud had intervened, or I had wandered off track after takeoff, I don't know, but there I was suddenly alone with no radio and nothing but blackness around me. I suppose it was my first experience of real fear when the realisation dawns that you cannot just do as you've been taught but you've got to sort a problem out alone. I did find my way back and landed and no-one commented on the unusual length of that particular circuit.

RAF Upwood was the next stage, to fly Blenheims. The Mark I was designed as a night fighter and was nimble and lively. The Mark IV with an elongated nose to make a navigator's office and a backward firing gun in the nose seemed to rob the plane of its sparkle. Nevertheless, I liked Blenheims and was pleased to get an "above average" assessment at this point. Upwood was a bit like a speed-dating event. It was here that we met navigators and wireless-operator/gunners and we were just told to form ourselves into crews. I was very happy with the two that I crewed up with at Upwood and also with the fourth member who joined us at Oulton

After operational training the normal move would be to a Bomber Command squadron, where, I now know, the life expectancy was about 6 months. Instead, six or eight of us were sent to Oulton near Norwich for ferry training.

The Lockheed Hudsons were passenger-carrying aircraft that had been converted to warplanes by the addition of gun turrets and bomb racks. They still retained their soundproofing and automatic pilots and were very comfortable. They were, however, prone to ground-looping. (This is when the aircraft is travelling at speed over the ground when taking off or landing and there is a loss of stability and control so that the aircraft ends up going sideways or backwards.)

The course lasted six weeks, at the end of which our orders were simply to take the aeroplanes to Calcutta, a simple enough task but not without hazards when carried out by inexperienced crews.

The first aircraft to take off from Portreath ground-looped, broke its undercarriage and burst into flames. The crew escaped unhurt but my last glimpse of England as we headed out over the water for Gibraltar was of a tiny pinprick of a red beacon over grey cliffs under a sullen watery sky. The leg from Gibraltar to Malta was all below fifty feet to avoid radar, but the expected two-hour stop at Malta was stretched to six hours because the Italians chose that time to bomb the island.

We had six days rest in Cairo, long enough for another crew, with which we had most association, to develop stomach trouble. Whether this was a contributory cause or not, no one will know but they crashed in the desert en route to Basra and were all killed. On Remembrance Sundays it is always these four men who first come to my mind.

A third aircraft fell by the wayside at Bahrain when it ground-looped on landing and broke its undercarriage. The rest of us made it through to Calcutta to join 353 Squadron. 353 Squadron's job was to protect the Bay of Bengal from the Japanese. We escorted shipping from the southern tip of India up to Calcutta, spent hours looking for submarines, attacked coastal installations and did a daily reconnaissance of the Burma coast.

I had the distinction of being the only one to be seriously hit by enemy fire. Two crews were sent off to fly low round the mass of islands off Taungup to look for any shipping that might be hiding in the many creeks. More through ignorance than arrogance, I flew in to have a look at the port of Taungup to be met by a shower of upward flying incendiaries. There was a loud bang behind my head as something in the radio exploded just as the rear gunner called up to say, rather dryly, *"Lot of little holes in the wing, Jack"*.

The navigator went back into the cabin to have a look and came back with the disturbing report that there was a fountain of petrol coming up through the floorboards. This unwelcome flow was stopped but fuel continued to run from the port wing tank so we headed for Feni to refuel. Upon landing, however, we found that one of the tyres was burst.

I was reconciled to having to wait at Feni for a replacement wheel but the crew of a Blenheim suggested that I came with them to Jessore where they were sure I would be given a lift by road to Calcutta and could report back at the Squadron to explain the situation. In the event the Jessore people were not so generous with their transport, but instead gave me a ticket to catch a train that left about midnight. Having been up since 5.00am I lay down on the floor of an empty carriage with my head on a parachute and fell fast asleep.

When I woke it was daylight and the carriage was full of white-clad Indians looking down with embarrassment and some puzzlement at this dishevelled, unshaven Brit.

I reached the Squadron by mid morning to be met with *"Oh, there you are. We lost radio contact with you and no one reported your landing so we had you down as 'missing'"*.

I returned to Feni the next day. A new wheel was fitted and the good tank was replenished. From today's perspective it seems breathtakingly casual but we all climbed aboard without further inspection, took off and flew back to base.

After a year of this activity the Squadron was converted to passenger carrying, and from November 1943 to early 1946 acted as an internal airline around India and Ceylon. I enjoyed every minute of this except for one occasion, on one particular air test, when the oil seal on the propeller of one engine burst, spraying the cylinders with oil. I thought the engine was on fire and shut it down but could not feather the propeller, thus inducing more drag than the other engine could cope with.

We failed to reach the runway by about 200 yards and in the ensuing meeting of metal with mother earth I was knocked unconscious, had to be dragged from the aeroplane as it caught fire and spent the next two weeks in hospital with a fractured skull.

We soon learnt that flying to a schedule in unpressurised aircraft had its own hazards. In the monsoon season the country was covered by great belts of cumulonimbus clouds, each a towering column of air currents, violent enough to break an aeroplane into pieces. Entry into cu-nims, or any formation of clouds that might contain them, was thus taboo, as was the practice of flying much above 10,000 feet.

But alongside this safety-first approach lay the urge to reach the destination on time. From these two conflicting demands grew the art of prudent persistence which often involved long detours to find chinks in those lethal curtains, chinks which would lead to blue skies and clear air.

In 1946, I became a Flight Commander with added responsibility for training and testing. The Squadron's record for safety and reliability was good and, probably because of this, together with two other old-timers, I was awarded the Air Force Cross.

Mission Aviation Fellowship

It was probably around the end of 1945 when someone on the Palam Airfield at Delhi showed me a paragraph in a magazine which said that a Christian organisation was being set up to supply aircraft for use in the inaccessible, wilder parts of the world. *"You might be interested in this"* he said. I was. I thought I would pursue inquiries when I got home.

Back in the UK in April 1946 I took all the exams for the commercial pilot's licence and turned up at the end for what I thought would be the formality of a medical exam but after all the tests the Medical Officer took me aside and said *"I'm sorry old chap. We have to fail you: your eyes are not good enough"*.

This left future plans looking rather blank but I went along to the one room office of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship to find out what it was all about. As I mounted the stairs the door opened and Murray Kendon came out accompanied by three or four others, all of whom, I later learned, were ex-service pilots. They were about to set off on a speaking tour of the UK. *"Come back in two weeks "* Murray said, *"Or if you've time to spare, perhaps you'd come in to answer the phone and deal with any mail"*. So, I went in for two weeks and stayed for four years.

Murray had not had an easy time since leaving the RAF with his vision for peacetime flying. The missionary societies that he had approached had received the panacea-barring enthusiasts of the MAF with reserve. They had after all been coping with travel problems since David Livingstone set out and were probably shrewd enough to see that, skilled though we might be in the air, we were used to being backed up by military engineering, communication, administration and supply systems. Some, it was rumoured, entertained the possibility that we were keen on flying and wanted someone else to pay for it. In fact, we were all of one mind, namely, that wartime had given us a skill that we wanted to offer to God. There was much prayer.

By mid 1947 several American and British societies had become sufficiently convinced that they asked us to go to Africa, to visit about a hundred outposts, as far as possible by air and to submit a report on how aircraft could solve travel problems.

There were not many light aircraft to choose from. We looked at the sales brochures, test-flew a few and opted for the Miles Gemini, a four-seater aircraft with two 100 hp engines. The question then arose as to who was to fly it. Murray could have done it but was needed to organise everything in the UK. The others who had helped him in the early days had departed to follow other careers. I was delighted to do it.

AFRICAN SURVEY

Stuart King had joined MAF in 1946. Stuart was an engineer and also had a pilot's licence. Stuart and I left Croydon on 13th January 1948 in weather that I would not fly in today. It was blowing a gale and raining. Photographs of the farewell party show us huddled round the aeroplane with backs to the wind and shoulders hunched.

The wartime attitude of *"if it is possible we can do it"*, prevailed. Several incidents occurred on our long trip to Nairobi. At Mursa Matruh in Libya we were kept waiting four hours for a customs officer to come out from the port. By the time he put his rubber stamps away it was after 8.00pm and totally dark. We had already flown three legs that day and I was suffering from that well-known and dangerous disease of *"press-on-itis"*. I asked the customs officer to drive to the far end of the airfield and to shine his car headlights back up the unlit runway and, with this aid, we took off, reaching Cairo before midnight.

Asmara, in what was the former Italian colony of Eritrea, had two surprises for us. Before leaving Khartoum we had arranged for runway lighting to be available as we intended to arrive soon after dark. Upon reaching Asmara however, we could see the runway but it had no lights and the whole airfield was in darkness. After circling a few times it became obvious that we were on our own with no alternative airfield within range, an unlit landing was the only option. A gentle, engine-on, approach to the long runway led to a surprisingly normal landing.

Asmara is over 7000 ft above sea level. It was here that we learned that the Gemini was weak at altitude. Upon taking off in the morning the aircraft struggled to climb to 20 feet and showed no signs of going any higher. Skimming over some telegraph wires Stuart and I had the briefest of discussions as to what to do. I pulled the emergency plug that shot the undercarriage down and sat the aircraft down in a ploughed field, across the furrows. *"You've chosen the only flat spot in Eritrea"* the Air Traffic Controller said when he arrived some 15 minutes later.

It only took minutes for a crowd of 30 or 40 to collect from what appeared to be an empty landscape. The ATCO had the human touch and soon had the bystanders enrolled as willing helpers to push the aircraft over several ploughed fields, over small banks, across a drainage ditch, up onto a road and through a hole in the perimeter fence that he had kindly cut for us. If the incident revealed the shortcomings of the engines, it also proved the toughness of the airframe. A very thorough examination of the aircraft revealed that there was no damage at all.

At Nairobi we found that Tom Banham, an ex-Royal Navy navigator, had worked out how we were to reach our 100 outposts. By the time the Gemini came to the end of its short but eventful life we had landed at about forty places, varying from international airports like Nairobi, Entebbe and Kinshasa (then Leopoldville), various little-used and emergency landing grounds and even on one occasion an un-inspected bit of ground in the Rift Valley that we were assured was long and hard enough and free of obstructions. The assurance was fully justified.

Some of the fields visited were, shall we say, interesting. Eldama Ravine in Kenya, at 5000 feet, turned out to be one of those downhill-downwind or uphill-into wind affairs. Stuart lightened the load to let me have a go at the former. I tore off down the strip, reaching what seemed to be a ferocious speed at the end but with an airspeed only a needle's width above stalling. There was no question of stopping. Pulling back on the stick got us juddering into the air and plummeting down into the ravine ahead to pick up airspeed. Climbing back to the strip, I scribbled a note, to say that I would land at Nakuru, tied it in a handkerchief and dropped it out of the window to Stuart who was gesticulating to the effect, I guessed, that I would be mad if I even thought of landing back on the strip. Stuart caught up with me by road.

A Dr Mark Poole had cleared a strip at his station in the Congo and assured us that after much rolling by pick-up trucks the ground was firm enough to land on. The landing run was the shortest ever, however. We came to a halt after about 50 yards with wheels up to their

axles in the sand. We took out everything that was movable and found the hardest bit of ground, which turned out to be uncomfortably close to trees and managed to take off with one on board without difficulty. Again, Stuart took the terra firma route to catch up in Luebo.

Only two days after leaving Dr. Poole we arrived overhead Kikwit and were at a loss to see exactly what was going on. There appeared to be two runways alongside each other. As we landed on the more promising of the two it was clear that all was not as it should be. Sticks and mounds of earth marked the sides of the runway. As we shut the engines down a Belgian construction engineer came out to tell us, with great tolerance, that this was an airfield under construction. The active field was some 500 metres away. But, would we like to take tea with him and his wife. Visitors, it seemed were few and far between.

At a place called Kitui we found that only half the strip was usable as the grass was so long. We asked if there was any chance of getting the grass cut before we took off. Within no time a lorry appeared from the local gaol with about twenty prisoners all armed with pangas who set to work and cleared an extra two hundred yards within minutes. "*Was it safe to arm dangerous criminals with long knives*" I cautiously inquired. They laughed. Most of the men were in what was called King George's Hotel for defaulting on payment for their wives.

The Gemini met its sad end on July 10th 1948. We took off from Usumbura in Rwanda with the intention of climbing up a long valley to cross a mountain range at about 9000 ft on our way back to Nairobi. We had previously been up to 12000 ft so knew that the height was no problem. The rate of climb up to the head of the valley was normal but as we got close to the mountains it became zero and then negative. In turning back to get over lower ground where we could circle and gain height the rate of descent became quite high despite the application of full power. After some wriggling about to avoid high ground, we needed to clear a spur from the main hillside to get clear of the hills, but could not avoid the tops of some banana trees. In a nose up attitude we hit the hillside, slithered up the slope and over the top. The impact was not all that abrupt but it broke the main spar and snapped the fuselage in half behind the cabin. The cabin however, was not deformed and the canopy opened without difficulty.

Stuart had a cut finger and I had a bruise on one thigh. As I climbed out of the wrecked aeroplane I was doing a mental calculation of how far we had flown from Usumbura and how many days it would take us to walk back. We then heard a noise up the hillside and looked up to see a lorry going by only fifty feet or so above us. Rescue, it seemed, was not going to be difficult. The first person to arrive was a Belgian priest on a motorbike, carrying a first aid kit in the form of a bottle of wine. He looked at us and said unbelievably, "Pas blessé!". (Not injured!).

The survey was finished by road and rail, the report completed and after a wait of several months for its contents to be digested, the Societies in the Sudan asked MAF to set up a service to enable people to travel in the wet season, a time when road travel is all but impossible.

Our insurance company had come up trumps and on their advice we bought a de Havilland Rapide, a fabric-covered biplane with two 250 HP engines and seats for six to eight passengers. Stuart and I delivered this to the Sudan in April 1950 where the question again raised its head, "Who is going to fly it?"

The South African Air Force pilot Steve Stevens, who I had met in London in 1949 when he was on the Berlin Airlift, had seen the need for a plane in the Sudan in 1946. It was he, who was to become MAF's first operational pilot in Africa. He arrived on a cheap charter Dakota flight from South Africa that was taking Jewish immigrants to Israel.

The account of those early days in the Sudan has been told in the fully-illustrated coffee table sized book:

'Early Wings Over Africa. '

Steve Stevens DFC

Mission Aviation Fellowship first operational pilot in Africa.

6. ALASTAIR MACDONALD

WW II aircraft engineer with the Fleet Air Arm

Alastair has always been interested in how things work. His father died when he was 18 months old and his mother never remarried, so he was an only child who had to fight most of childhood's battles on his own. He has never forgotten how horrified his mother was when she discovered his bicycle completely dismantled one day, including the Sturmey-Archer 3-speed gear inside the back hub! The aviation interest developed when he had learnt as much as possible about the workings of motorcars. Aircraft were out of his reach and presented an intriguing challenge: he decided to become an aircraft engineer.

Being born in 1924, he was still a schoolboy in London when war broke out in 1939.

Finishing school, he enrolled at the college of Aircraft Engineering and was part way through the three year course when "called up," however the authorities decided it was more important for the war effort for him to complete that training. He joined the Home Guard and became a "Despatch Rider," using a clunky 350cc BSA motorcycle to take military messages around London during the blackout. The most memorable event was colliding with a lamppost one foggy evening and breaking his ankle.

After finishing college in 1945, he was commissioned in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm as an Air Engineer Officer. For the next five years he kept Corsairs, Seafires, Barracudas (the flying Christmas tree), Walruses and other naval aircraft flyable from various air stations, one of which was overseas in Malta. He also had over a year aboard the aircraft carrier "Implacable" when it was primarily engaged in working up new squadrons to operational standard, steaming up and down the North Sea. Those years taught him much about how to safely "improvise" when key spare parts were unobtainable. He also learnt the practical importance of discipline and gained leadership experience. Equally important was working with different systems of aircraft maintenance.

JOINING MAF - SUDAN

Whilst posted to the Naval Air Station of Lossiemouth in 1948 he first heard of the formation of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship from an RAF pilot. It immediately caught his imagination and he wrote for detailed information. Seeking God's guidance about leaving the security and appeal of a naval officer's life, he resigned his commission in 1950. Then it was back to school! He had lots of practical aircraft engineering experience but lacked the vital civilian aircraft engineering licences. He spent a year gaining them, also building up flight experience because he had learnt to fly during his last months in the Navy.

Joining MAF as a pilot/engineer at the end of 1951, Alastair first came to the Sudan in early 1952 to join Stuart King and me.

On one flight with me to the border of Ethiopia, the Rapide's tail wheel became stuck in a rut immediately after landing and the tail end of the fuselage was torn out. I expected to be stuck there for a long time, without being able to let my wife Kay, who was at Doro 100 miles to the north, know what had happened to us. But to my amazement, Alastair, with the help of a local carpenter, was able to repair the Rapide in 15 hours, the plane being built of wood and fabric was what made it possible.

LAOS AND THAILAND

Shortly afterwards, Alastair was sent to Laos in the Far East to make an aviation survey for the Christian and Missionary Alliance who hoped MAF could provide service for their

increasing work. He used an aircraft owned by one of their missionaries. Discovering that a viable operation must also be linked to missionaries in northern Thailand, he arrived in Bangkok in early 1953. There he met Margaret Alldridge, a recently arrived American missionary who was struggling to learn Thai, and married her a few months later. He was able to buy a Piper Pacer aircraft there from a departing missionary, and application was made to the Laotian and Thai authorities for a future MAF service.

Knowing that it would be several months before approval could be given, they accepted an invitation from the Borneo Evangelical Mission and flew the Pacer down to Singapore and across to Borneo. The BEM operated one aircraft and lacked a qualified engineer. After several months of jungle flying, they flew back to Bangkok, only to discover that the Thai authorities had refused the application.

BACK TO SUDAN

We in MAF UK asked them to return to the Sudan because Stuart King was badly in need of furlough, so in February 1954 Alastair and Margaret flew the Pacer from Bangkok to Khartoum. The journey took two weeks because they could not fly across either the sea or the desert en route. Margaret was signed on as “crew”, helping with the navigation.

Shortly afterwards they moved south to the new MAF HQ at Malakal in the south Sudan. By then Gordon Marshall had arrived from South Africa. Alastair and Gordon then developed the programme, using primarily the De Havilland Rapide twin-engine plane. At that time government regulations prohibited single engine aircraft from flying out of gliding range of the Nile or other rivers. Because suitable R/T radios were not yet available, the Rapide had a massive Radio Telegraphy set for morse code communication. Navigation was entirely by reference to what could be seen on the ground or from the sky. Under these conditions it was impracticable to both fly and work the radio so usually Alastair and Gordon flew together, swapping places for the return leg.

At first, they lived in houses temporarily vacated by government officials for a month or so at a time, which meant they moved frequently as houses became available. It was a great blessing for Margaret that Gordon's wife Jean, was also an American. Winston Churchill's famous statement that England and America are two great nations divided by a common language was proved over and over again!

In one month Alastair and Gordon were away from home for three weeks without being able to let their wives know the reason why. It had not been planned that way but medical and other vital flights were requested at the places they landed. Margaret's life was far from easy as the family grew. Like the other MAF wives, she had a job to do, typing correspondence and coping with guests. Home schooling was the only satisfactory teaching method for the first two years.

In due course, the Sudanese Aviation Ministry recognised MAF's unique experience of navigating over the Sudan's trackless terrain and gave special permission to change to single engine aircraft. That made it possible to replace the Rapide with two Cessna 180 all-metal planes. That change made it necessary for Alastair to get the American A & P aircraft maintenance ratings. Typically, he was asked to get them by having an extended home leave in 1957.

The family returned to Malakal in 1958. By this time the administrative workload had increased to the point where Alastair decided to give up piloting in order to cope with administrative visits, paperwork and maintenance. And there was now radio voice communication between the base, the aircraft and other Mission stations. The work

expanded until there were about 30 “bush” airstrips in regular use. One Cessna was annually fitted with floats during the wet season to meet the demand for service.

With a hangar now at Malakal, regular maintenance of the Cessnas was easier, but repairs were trickier. Spares had to be imported to Khartoum and then either flown south or put aboard the “Postboat.” This was the regular bi-weekly service by a paddle-wheel steamer that had a variety of barges lashed alongside it. Alastair’s most difficult job came when Tony Holloway, an ex-navy pilot, capsized the floatplane in the Nile! Whilst turning for take-off, a very strong gust of wind lifted the left wing so that the plane cartwheeled over, pivoting on the grounded right wing in that shallow water. With his navy training, Tony escaped unhurt and thankfully there were no passengers. When Alastair got to the scene, the plane was floating upside down with only the bottoms of the floats above water! After managing to get the aircraft ashore right way up, it took several months to get a new right wing, engine, propeller and instruments to Malakal, but the plane was rebuilt safely. A little less dramatic was the time when Gordon hit a hippo when landing in the Nile - a repair headache of major interest and difficulty.

It was whilst doing the administration that Alastair was especially aware that people were praying for MAF. He has many stories to tell of remarkable chains of “coincidences.” One such story had to do with getting land to build their own homes in newly independent Sudan. It was a complicated process. Permission had to be granted from the government in Khartoum. After several months, Alastair and Gordon got on a flight to Khartoum and visited the relevant ministry.

The helpful young official explained his problem. He took them to an adjacent room that had a very big table covered with papers: these were all requests for approval by his boss! He said *“If you can find your application, then I’ll get it on its way”*. So Gordon and Alastair got busy and managed to find it. Success? Well, partly. When the approval reached Malakal it was for five plots of land to be sold by auction and MAF needed three of them.

They knew that some Greek merchants wanted plots, also the local Member of Parliament. What chance did they have? The auction was set for one morning in the District Commissioner’s office. That night there was a great storm with torrential rain. Unusually, the heavy rain continued into the morning and at 0940 Gordon and Alastair set out for the office on their motor scooter, arriving like the proverbial drowned rats.

At 10.00 the Commissioner stood up and announced to the two of them, *“Gentlemen, it’s time for the auction to begin, but I know that the MP and others are interested. Owing to the weather I will wait for another ten minutes.”* About five minutes later an Arab merchant wandered in, but he didn’t want land for himself.

At ten past the auction started with only the merchant bidding against them, so they got the three plots at a very low price and the merchant bought the other two. Shortly after they had signed the necessary documents, the door banged open and the MP entered. He was furious that the Commissioner had not waited for him, but pragmatically he quickly did business with the merchant. It was several days later before they discovered why the main opposition, the wealthy Greek merchants, had not arrived. Each independently had reckoned that the auction would be postponed because of the weather – none had thought to pick up a telephone and find out.

The details of how three aluminium prefabs were imported and built is another story of similar “coincidences” fitting together. Alastair has written the story of “The Impossible Hangar Removal”. This was when the hanger at Malakal, big enough for two aircraft, was moved from one airport site to another without dismantling it. An MAF engineer has to put his hand to many varied interpretations of his job description and may find himself tackling

jobs for which he has not had any training!

ETHIOPIA

1962 held a family crisis for the MacDonalds when Alastair and Margaret's 8-year-old daughter, Mary, was paralysed from an attack of polyneuritis. At the time Mary was in boarding school in Ethiopia. How Alastair and Margaret travelled separately to Addis Ababa to join Mary, got her onto an American Air Force DC3 flight to the only working iron lung in north Africa in Asmara, followed by Mary's recovery, is another remarkable story the happy outcome of which was a result of many remarkable and unusual things fitting together miraculously.

In 1964 they moved to Ethiopia for Alastair to take charge of the developing MAF programme there. Three planes were now operating from two separate bases in Addis and Jimma. MAF also introduced their first Cessna 185 and 206 aircraft.

In 1969 Alastair and Margaret and their four children moved West to Chad and Nigeria. Here Alastair gained new experience when he maintained a Cessna 185 fitted with amphibious floats for use on Lake Chad.

Alastair and Margaret returned to Malakal in 1977 to reopen the MAF programme that had had to close during a period of civil war. The administrative challenges were particularly difficult.

PORTABLE RECORDING MINISTRIES

Going on an extended furlough in 1979 to provide help to their university age children, they were told in 1981 that MAF had no suitable work available so, whilst still belonging to MAF, they linked up with Portable Recording Ministries in parallel. Just as MAF was little known in the 1950's, so PRM was in the pioneering stage of developing the audio cassette ministry for the churches in developing nations. With so much illiteracy in the world, recorded audiotapes were proving to be a very effective teaching tool.

Initially the greatest challenge was how to keep the players repaired in primitive conditions as an effective audio ministry is not possible without reliable players! Alastair and Margaret visited and lived in several countries to explore what solutions might work and what would not. The basic concept that was put in place was to teach local churches about how to have their own independent cassette ministry, instead of making each one a "project" with on-going dependency on PRM.

Audiotapes made it possible for the same material to be listened to over and over again until understood. Cassettes in the local language can be used to teach hygiene, first aid and other socially important subjects as well as explaining about God's love. For the next eleven years Alastair and Margaret worked out the principles for each aspect and then simplified them so that the teaching could be used in different cultures. The result is a set of comprehensive guides written using Wycliffe's "Easy English" programme. (This is a special way of using the language that gives maximum comprehension to those for whom English is not their first language). The guides cover all aspects from initial audience surveys to recording suitable messages, always in the local mother tongue.

The repair guide explains how the specially developed hand-wound players work and, using many illustrations, give instructions on making repairs in case something goes wrong while they are in use. As an example, the vital principle of a "drive train" is explained in terms of an ox cart going to market. If an ox goes lame, the journey cannot continue even

though the driver and cart are undamaged. The journey halts until either another ox is hitched up or the cart is partially unloaded. This is an illustration of the point that when part of a machine stops working, that part might not be faulty itself but dependent on another part that has failed.

Even though Alastair was already five years past normal retirement age, MAF was by now so short of experienced engineers that it recalled him to East Africa in 1992. This time, however, Margaret was not given a MAF job so that she could continue their PRM work. By then MAF had become much bigger and was operating larger planes in order to meet demand. Navigation was no longer purely visual but backed up with Global Position Indicators linked to satellites. For the next two years Alastair had the responsibility of maintaining the Cessna 210 aircraft of the Ugandan programme.

They finally left MAF in November 1994 but continue with PRM. Even though a whole Bible, together with commentaries, can now be recorded on a single CD, cassettes continue to be in demand. They are a simple, cheap and proven audio tool. An increasing world population means that more and more people are illiterate as governments struggle to fund adequate schooling. Audio is becoming more and more important! Through the internet Alastair and Margaret can continue working with PRM largely from home.

Although Alistair is touching 90, he is still very active. He has now been trained as a Street Pastor for the Isle of Wight, where he, Margaret and daughter Roselyn now live. Margaret, after her long life of services to Missions is now very unwell.

MAF-EUROPE OPERATIONS UPDATE

In the latter part of the 20th century the British branch of MAF changed its name to **MAF Europe** to reflect the increasing number of pilots, engineers and other staff who were joining MAF from other European countries. Several European countries now have their own national support groups who have joined the MAF UK group in the support of the operational work of MAF Europe. Staff from **Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden & Switzerland** have, at times, joined their UK colleagues in providing expatriate staff for MAF Europe.

By the early 21st century MAF Europe had **operational programmes** based not only in seven African countries but also in **Bangladesh** and **Mongolia**. These two Asian countries provide unique challenges for MAF flight operations. The bitter winter cold of Mongolia (- 40 deg C. at times) and the requirement for pilots to learn the difficult Mongolian language meant progress was initially slow. However, there is now a viable flight operation serving the tremendous spiritual need of the young Mongolian church as it reaches out to the remote corners of this country.

MAF's seaplane experience in **Sudan** had been updated with the temporary operation of a small floatplane on **Lake Victoria** in **Uganda** but a larger amphibious seaplane would be needed for the vast network of rivers that is **Bangladesh**. Happily the **Cessna Caravan Amphibian** has proved ideal for the task and our pilots regularly fly to locations in all seasons that would otherwise be cut off from medical and other help. MAF has often been commended for its role in bringing relief to areas devastated by the annual monsoon disasters ravaging this densely populated country. There had been no amphibious aircraft regularly operated in Bangladesh until MAF began its work there.

Demands on MAF's flight operations in Africa continue to increase as wars & instability mean that even the few all weather roads become too dangerous for land travel. The

provision of the larger **12 seat Caravan aircraft** has transformed operations, and of all the operational MAF groups, **MAF Europe** now has the largest number of these aircraft. Their sophisticated technology enables flying to take place in almost all weathers and even at night. So MAF pilots are not only coping with challenging bush flying situations but also having to integrate into airline traffic patterns under instrument flying conditions.

7. Murray Kendon

WWII pilot with a vision for MAF

Contributed by Murray Kendon

"Born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1917, I was privileged to grow up in a Christian family on the slopes of One Tree Hill, three square miles of back yard.

I became a Christian in 1933 under the fiery preaching of Billy Nicholson, who taught us new Christians to share our new found faith. Great advice, and some of us, following it, using singing and simple testimonies, started witnessing in hospitals, on the streets and beaches, in parks and homes, at churches and mission halls.

We also started prayer and fellowship meetings which soon outgrew houses and became a down-town mission full of young people and their friends, plus young dropouts and old drunks, crammed into a basement billiard saloon recently closed by the police for its violence. They were wonderful days with many believing in Christ and being delivered from their old ways. Another bit of Billy's excellent advice which we followed, was to start reading the Bible from day one, reading fast, right through several times, before attempting to study it.

However, an increasing urge was growing in my heart to leave the city work and somehow get the message to those living away from city or town, especially the young people, with little or no witness to the reality of true life in Christ. One night another of the new Christians told me he was feeling the same urge, and after praying together for God's guidance and confirmation over the next nine months we left work and home early in 1937 to sing and preach in small townships and scattered settlements.

We started in the 'King Country', an area of timber mills and bush camps. We were often able to ride one of the primitive log trains up the rickety rails about 20 miles out to "bush whacking" areas, making friends, crosscutting felled logs, enjoying an enormous meal in the cookhouse and then singing and speaking to the men before walking back on the rails through the night to sleep in our old car.

It was 1938 and time to leave the timber felling area and move to mining and farming areas. We built a tiny trailer-caravan and moved to the east coast. Now the work was very different. Being closer to Auckland City we sought the help of a team to start, so with a small band of enthusiastic young Christian men and women and an old banjo we wowed the beaches, parks and streets with songs, testimonies and preaching.

After the weekend we visited the farmhouses in one area and when one of the families seemed interested asked if they would like us to have a meeting in their house, say, every Monday for about six weeks. This was agreed then we visited in another area and arranged to do the same for Tuesdays. The weekends were spent witnessing at every welcoming church, youth group or street meeting, finishing the six weeks with nightly special meetings. Moving on down the coast we made similar arrangements, continuing until petrol was no longer allowed for such work.

When the time came to be called up I was able to choose Air Force training as a pilot. I learnt to fly at Christchurch, in the old faithful Tiger Moths. Taking the opportunity of training in Canada, I flew Harvards and Yales from Duville, Ontario, and because the CO suggested Coastal Command, Ansons, on a navigator's course in Prince Edward Island. Final training was in Britain, on Oxfords at Inverness, Scotland, and then on Wellingtons at

Silloth on the Solway Firth bordering Scotland.

Talking about Oxfords, 4 pilots from Inverness got leave to take one on a flying holiday. The sky was clear and they climbed well above the high hills, but suddenly they were losing height. Even on full throttles in an invisible down-draught they crashed, with considerable injuries and no help for many painful miles.

One cloudy day I was sent above for an hour of exercises, then, keeping an eye on the hole I had climbed through, I started to descend only to find it was too close to the mountains, so I flew to the coast looking for an entry from the sea.

The localized map gave me no help so I flew northwards, on and on, right round the rugged north coast, then southwards, landing on an airfield. Entering the control tower I asked where I was. Much to their amusement, the controller told me I was in Wick, right in the north of Scotland. He cut a great 3 square meter chunk out of the wall map, folded it and gave it to me as a keepsake. I called the squadron CO expecting a blast, but he was delighted that I was down safely.

Silloth was the last training station before actual war operations. We needed to be so familiar with the Wellingtons that flying them would be second nature, so the schedule was rigid but enjoyable. Aircrew were given a last leave before posting. I took leave in Ireland where after the Sunday service at the Castlereagh Rd. Mission some of the keen young men said *"If you will preach for a few nights we'll fill the hall"*. I did and they did and we had a wonderful time of blessing and salvation!

Back in Silloth, friends asked about the leave and said, *"We'll make the church available if you do the same here"* so we did. One night a whole row of WAAF cooks came, and some of them received Christ. One was especially keen and attended every follow-up bible study/prayer meeting we had. Her name was Minnie, from Newcastle on Tyne. She was a bit shy but full of fun and Geordie wit and she quickly made friends. She was hungry to learn about the Bible and Christian things.

Within days I got notice that I was posted to 179 Squadron at Predannick in south Cornwall near Helston of the Floral Dance fame. I walked towards the camp to tell Minnie and met her coming with news that she too was posted to 179 Squadron! After I arrived in Predannick we soon arranged to meet in the local village of Mullion.

For me active service with 179 Squadron, was to be as a co-pilot flying Wellingtons. They were armed with depth charges, machine guns, 22million-candlepower searchlights and powerful radar. The crew of 6 comprised Brits, Aussies and Kiwis.

Our brief was to find and destroy enemy submarines that were combing the Atlantic to find and sink allied ships carrying troops, fuel or supplies. We were to fly low over the ocean from dark to dawn every third night carrying no lights and maintaining radio silence except for a kill or a sighting. Flying across the Bay of Biscay one night watching the flack from France fill the sky to attack the aircraft of a British thousand bomber raid, I thought, *"How come thousands of planes can be found to kill and destroy, and only a handful to spread God's amazing offer of free forgiveness and eternal life in glory?"*

I remembered a missionary meeting years before when we were told of a team that set out to find a tribe said to live deep in a jungle somewhere. They returned weeks later out of food, worn out by incredible hardship and almost killed by a flash flood that destroyed their canoe, and I thought, *"A small aeroplane could have found the tribe and mapped a route, all in a day or two, and later guided the team, dropping supplies to them."*

Between flights, when Minnie's cooking duties allowed, we biked and later drove all over south Cornwall visiting many church and other groups, to sing (she had a lovely voice) and

tell of God's love and saving power. We married while still in the Forces, and have served our wonderful Master together ever since.

One evening when we were walking to the camp we saw a plane slowly flying low over the airstrip. It didn't land but turned back to make another approach. Then we heard the sickening thud as it crashed into the solid cliff face. The sky flared with a dull orange fire. We rushed to the Control Tower and found the pilot had reported some fuel leaking into the cockpit and the crew becoming confused. He kept asking for the runway flares to be lit. They were full on. If only the pilot had known, he needed only to close the throttles and the plane would have landed safely. Next morning all I could find on the beach below was a cap and half a flying boot with the foot in it.

A VISION OF A MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP

Our Squadron CO granted me leave to visit Dr. Thomas Cochrane, president of the Movement for World Evangelisation at the Mildmay Centre in London, to talk about the possibilities of using planes to speed up missionary work. He heard me out for an hour, and then said, *"God has laid this on your heart, Murray, perhaps He wants you to do something about it yourself. You pray about it, write an article and I will publish it."*

I returned to Cornwall, prayed with Minnie about it, and we sat down and wrote it together. It was published on July 5th 1945. With encouragement and financial help from Mildmay we started. Dr Cochrane named it Missionary Aviation Fellowship. He heard of an American group called Christian Airmen's Missionary Fellowship, so we made contact and I flew over to meet them. Their vision and ours were almost identical and we agreed to work together. They took our name that much later was shortened to Mission Aviation Fellowship.

I was joined by Trevor Strong, a Pathfinder Pilot flying Lancasters. He was committed to return to New Zealand to marry, but wanted to help till then. Others including Stuart King joined us, and Stuart has told the British MAF story in his book, entitled Hope Has Wings. Keith Rimmer, founder of The Challenge and Mildmay Representative in New Zealand, published British MAF information and a support group was established to send funds and recruit pilots and aircraft engineers. Some began training with a view to applying for MAF work.

In 1949 L B Miller, Christchurch Mildmay Representative, concerned about young people's ignorance of Christianity, wrote to Dr. Cochrane asking if he could recommend someone to join the Australian George Brown, sharing a custom-made bus and trailer-caravan for a year travelling through the South Island to introduce Christianity to students.

Knowing my passion for evangelism Dr. Cochrane suggested this to me. British MAF seemed to be doing well, and it would give me an opportunity to encourage the NZMAF at the same time. In 1950 George and I were privileged to speak to all the students of almost every high school and district high school in the large island. At the same time all three of us witnessed in pubs, dance halls, factories, meat works, on the streets and in churches, and many turned to the Lord.

Interest in and support for MAF grew. George had to return to Oz and Ken Fowler helped us for the rest of the year. Unknown to us, Mildmay and UKMAF began to suffer financial stress and we did not receive the expected request to return to London, so we spent another encouraging year doing similar work throughout the North Island.

Early in 1952 I was invited to become director of the Auckland Youth for Christ Rally, and as UKMAF was in good hands and interest in NZ was high I stayed on, combining YFC and MAF work. An MAF committee was formed with the immediate goal of gaining support for

the British work and a later goal of NZ that was to have a role in a south East Asian Mission field. The first chairman of this committee, later called the board, was Trevor Strong who was stirring up interest in Auckland and the North.

Back in 1947 Edwin "Harry" Hartwig had asked for an Australian group wanting to begin flying work for missions in New Guinea to be called MAF. This was gladly agreed. He himself pioneered the service from Port Moresby. The New Guinea highlands area is one of the world's most dangerous flying places, mostly cloud-covered high mountains. Unable to find a way through one day "Harry" was tragically killed. The work languished for some time but USMAF, who were already operating in West Irian, offered to help re-establish the Australian MAF work in Papua New Guinea.

Many New Zealand pilots and engineers served with the Australian staff and it is wonderful to see how God's blessing has rested on the rapidly expanding work, which became more like a joint operation. We joyfully thank God and give Him all the glory.

By the sixties MAF's requirement for staff with high technical qualifications and business skills meant that I should place my responsibilities in more capable hands, and I believed that the Lord was prompting me to accept an unexpected offer of product designer with a Lower Hutt Firm. Ever since I have had great joy in witnessing to folk who may never otherwise have understood God's incredible offer of free pardon and eternal life."

8. Trevor Strong DFC

Lancaster Pathfinder pilot becomes Chairman of New Zealand MAF.

Contributed by Trevor Strong:

In 1939 World War II commenced. I had become a Christian and together with some of my friends, wondered just what we should do. I had always had a desire to fly, so I decided to join the Air Force. Doug, Graham and I did a preliminary course, at home by correspondence. We joined the Air Force at Levin, New Zealand, then moved to Rotorua; from there we moved to Taire aerodrome, Dunedin, learning to fly Tiger Moths - then to Wigram, Christchurch, where we flew the Oxford twin-engine aircraft.

In January 1943 we left for England on board the Port-Victor. We had engine trouble as we approached England in the Submarine-zone (luckily heavy fog) - a bit scary, lots of tension on board until we were underway again. Some of the seamen had lost their ships and personal belongings a couple of times, as they had tried to get back to England.

We arrived at Bristol, went on to London, and then down to Bournemouth. We were there for a short while, until posted to do a refresher course on Oxfords at No 15 Advanced Flying Unit RAF Station, Ramsbury.

From there to No 1 Beam Approach School, Watchfield

Next to No 11 Operational Training Unit Oakley. Flying **Wellingtons** in July

Then to No 11 O.T.U. Westcott. Flying Wellingtons in August

Then to No 1657 Conversation Unit. Unit Stradishall. Flying **Stirlings** in November.

Then onto 149 Squadron. Flying Stirlings in December.

I was then posted to 7 Squadron, Oakington Pathfinders on **Lancasters** in February 1944

When I went out on my 45th dangerous sortie, I knew that it would be my last because aircrew were forced into a rest period after a certain number of air strikes. For our squadron and their particular targets 45 was the maximum number allowed. Having survived 44 attacks I did not expect to be shot down on my last assignment, but we were.

On the 25th August 1944 our plane was shot down by a ME 110 fighter as we were leaving the target, which was the Opal Engineering Works at Russelheim. The rear gunner called for evasive action so I threw the plane into a starboard dive. When I attempted to pull out of the dive I found I was unable to do so, I think the hydraulics must have been shot away. I gave the order for the crew to bail out. After I had given time for everyone to leave the aircraft I undid my harness and let go the stick and climbed down to the Bomb Aimer's compartment and dived head-first out of the escape hatch. It was only when I was bowling over and over in midair that I realized I had not taken hold of the ripcord handle.

I remembered something which was told us in a lecture, to bring one's hand up to one side of the face and run it down one side of the body - if not there, bring the hand to the other side of the face and down the other side. I found the rip cord handle and gave it a mighty tug. The parachute opened and I was brought up with a real jerk. I was not in the air long and I saw the ground coming up to meet me. I braced myself for a landing. Fortunately, I landed in a cornfield. I hid my chute in a ditch and headed off to a forest up in the hills. When I was really exhausted, I put my head on a log and went off to sleep.

In the morning I examined my escape-kit and took off my badges etc., and set off. As I walked through the forest I could hear dogs barking and knew there was a search party out

looking for us.

I walked for a couple of days. Then I came to a track leading up through the forest, probably a firebreak. As I hid in the bushes I saw people heading up the track. I watched them and I noticed some boys throwing sticks up into the trees. I decided when it was dark I would investigate - sure enough it was an apple tree so I climbed up and filled my battledress with apples.

The real problem at this time of year was lack of water. When it was dark I made my way down the track, - at the bottom of the hill I found myself in the centre of a small village. As I moved round a curve in the road, a door opened and I was caught in a shaft of light. A person spoke, but I did not answer as I did not know the German language. I proceeded along the road intending to dive into the bush again. However before doing so I was grabbed on either side by two guys who had come from behind on bicycles. I was taken back to the village.

All the village people came into the room to observe. Fortunately two Air Force people took charge of the situation. They took my watch, ring, escape kit etc. from me. One guy came forward and ripped open my battledress, and out tumbled all the apples. He was startled and jumped back. I think he thought they were hand-grenades!

They wanted to know what city we had bombed, but of course I gave them only my name, rank and number. After a short while a big black car arrived and I was taken into a town called Zimmern. I was put in the town jail, and was given a very uncomfortable bed to sleep on.

Early in the morning there was an air-raid by the Americans. I could hear the bombs whistling down and exploding. It was not very comfortable being on the receiving end! The next day I was taken to an Air Force Aerodrome. I was there for a couple of days and then taken to a Railway Station. As the train pulled out of the Station the guard pointed out to me the Opal Engineering Works that had been our target. It was completely demolished.

We were taken to a place called Oberrusel - the Interrogation Centre. This was a fairly large building with many small rooms or cells, with small barred windows. A couple of times I was taken to be interrogated by a German officer who spoke very good English. I told him I would give him my name, rank and number, and that was it. Finally he said I was a spy dropped behind the German lines and that he would hand me over to the Gestapo, but this was just bluff! After about a week, we were sent by train to Stalag Luft 1, an Air Force P.O.W. camp.

We were fortunate to receive a small suitcase from the Red Cross containing warm woollen clothes etc. We travelled only at nighttime, during the day we were parked at a railway siding. Our camp was situated at a place called Barth, on the Baltic coast due north from Berlin. Stalag Luft 1 contained about nine thousand airmen: British and American. At first I was interviewed by a small group of Kiwis, to make sure I was a New Zealander and not a German stooge. One of these was Eric Kelly, from Palmerston, North Island. We became very good friends.

I did not think I would be a P.O.W. for long as I had already taken part in the D-Day operation and figured the war would not last too long. However it dragged on a bit, and I was there for eight months. As we moved into the winter it became very cold. The Germans outside the wire would be skating on the ice, while we made snow-slides.

Early morning and in the evening we would be paraded to be counted. Sometimes this would take some time and we would have to stand there in the cold. As the war dragged on, food and fuel became very scarce. We were fortunate to receive some Red Cross

parcels. At this stage it was decided not to attempt to escape, as we were too near the end of the war, although previously a number of tunnels had been dug. We had a secret wireless set and received daily news of the progress of the armies and general news from London.

We were about halfway between the advancing armies, the Russians from the East and the Americans and British from the West. The Russians reached us first. The guards, and the civilian population, disappeared. We could see the crowds of people moving along the road away from the Russians. The Cossack horsemen rounded up some farm animals and brought them to the camp for extra food supplies.

When the war finally ended, we stayed in the camp a full week before we were flown to England - the reason being that there were many POWs in a far worse condition than us. Some had been marching through the winter, ahead of the Russians, and needed to get back as soon as possible. We were then flown in the American Flying Fortresses, to a place called Ford, in England.

When it was announced that I had been awarded a DFC for valour, I was not sure why. Probably because of successful flying on those 45 attacks on enemy installations, particularly in regard to the time when enemy fire shot out three of our four engines. On just one engine I was able to nurse our aircraft slowly back to base. When we landed we found that because I was so long overdue, owing to returning at such a slow speed, our squadron had given up hope of seeing our aircraft again.

Soon after our return to New Zealand, Murray Kendon and I put our energies into forming a New Zealand MAF on the lines of what was done in England. I did all I could to arouse the interest of New Zealanders. An MAF committee was formed, and I became the chairman. Our aim was to support Australian MAF work in New Guinea by providing pilots, engineers and others. This is what NZMAF has been doing ever since.

Over the years 85 people from New Zealand have served with MAF in various parts of the world, and at the time of writing there are 18 active in MAF.

9. Harry Hartwig

WWII Liberator pilot becomes MAF's first pilot in New Guinea.

Edwin Benno Hartwig (Harry) was born at Nuriootpa, South Australia on 5th March 1916 and was brought up in the Lutheran Church there. After completing his schooling he began work with Penfolds wine producing company in South Australia. He worked in the laboratory as a chemist and wine taster. Through the witness and prayers of a fellow employee, Harry was deeply convicted of his need of salvation. Kneeling there in the laboratory of the winery he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

In late 1942, Harry joined the Australian Military Forces in a medical unit, transferred to the Royal Australian Air Force, and commenced his flying training at Parafield Airfield, South Australia in January 1943. He went to Canada in May 1943 for further training and then to England in May 1944. He became the captain of a Liberator, first with the RAAF in 206 Squadron Coastal Command, and later with RAF Coastal Command. In his many operations over the Channel, Atlantic, North Sea and Norwegian coasts, he proved the great sustaining power of God in remarkable ways.

While in Britain, Harry came to hear of other wartime pilots who were keen to use their aviation skills in God's service.

FORMING AN AUSTRALIAN MAF

On his return to Australia, Harry Hartwig was demobbed in January 1946. With a desire to train for God's service, possibly in aviation, he enrolled as a student at the Melbourne Bible Institute. While there he had a growing desire to do what had been done in Britain and America: to form a Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

In June 1947, encouraged by Rev. J. W. Searle and Rev. A. H. Hawley, the business manager of the Institute, a meeting was called under the chairmanship of Mr. L. E. Buck, who called on Harry to give a summary of the events which led to the calling of the meeting with the view to the forming a Missionary Aviation Fellowship. On 9 April 1948, the Australian MAF was incorporated as a non-profit company and Harry was appointed its first full-time worker.

When Missionary societies were informed about the forming of an Australian MAF they told of needs in various countries, especially in Northern Australia and New Guinea.

SURVEYING THE AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK AND NEW GUINEA

Early in 1949 Australian MAF bought a Tiger Moth. Harry and Alex Freind, a pilot-engineer then set off on a survey of the huge territory of Northern Australia. After the Tiger Moth had been dedicated by the acting MAF chairman Canon Arrowsmith, on the lawns of St. John's Anglican Church in Toorak, they took off from Melbourne's Essendon Airport in a plane that only had a cruising speed of 70 knots. They knew it was going to take many flying hours to cover the vastness of the Northern Territory and Queensland.

The survey covered most of the missions working there, such as the Aboriginal Inland Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Brethren, the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. When they reached Cairns in Queensland, Harry left Alex Freind to complete the survey on behalf of the Australian Inland Mission and the Baptist and Lutheran Missions. The Lutherans were willing to fund the cost of plane and equipment, while MAF would provide the crew of a pilot and a pilot-engineer.

Harry caught a Qantas DC3 to New Guinea to do a survey there in conjunction with the

Lutheran Mission. These surveys resulted in the Australian MAF Council deciding to establish aviation programmes in both areas with an MAF plane being based at Normanton in the far north of Queensland and at Madang in New Guinea.

A new British Auster Autocar was ordered because it was known to be a really rugged single engine monoplane with a big payload of 600 pounds. MAF felt that this strong aircraft with a simple frame would be ideal for New Guinea. It had short take-off and landing capabilities and was equipped with the famous Gipsy Major engine of 120 hp. It arrived by sea from England in February 1951.

OFF TO NEW GUINEA

Harry was to fulfil the role of pilot and Bob Hutchins of American MAF would be the pilot-engineer. Bob and his wife Betty arrived in Australia shortly before the Auster. When it arrived Bob made some modifications to the Auster, such as fittings for a stretcher and seat belts. After the dedication of the Auster, the two pilots began their long flight to New Guinea on 7 April. To follow later were Bob's wife Betty and Harry's wife Margaret and their infant daughter Beth.

The Australian MAF programme that had taken three years to get going began on 7 May 1951. By the end of that month the Auster had flown 75 hours, carrying 30 passengers and 15,000 lbs of freight, increasing to 95 hours and more than 23,000 lbs of cargo in June.

Encouraged by this promising start, Harry Hartwig began to make plans to establish a similar programme for the Unevangelised Fields Mission in Dutch New Guinea. The vision of years was becoming a reality.

What follows are extracts from Vic Ambrose's very comprehensive book BALUS BILONG MIPELA - The story of Missionary Aviation Fellowship, Australia and New Zealand. It is a fund of information as well as history. A 'must read' for all MAF personnel who are going to work in New Guinea or in West Papua as the western half of the island is known today. The title is Melanesian Pidgin for 'our aeroplane' - the excited cry of New Guinean villagers when MAF's aircraft appeared in the skies.

"Sunday, August 5, was a rest day for the two MAF families in Madang, and during their devotions that evening the Hartwigs read together Psalm 23. Their attention was particularly drawn to verse 4: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me'.

The Monday promised to be a busy day, with two flights to be made into the Highlands. The second flight was to Asaroka in the Goroka Valley, where Harry unloaded his three passengers, picked up some village produce, and took off on his return flight to Madang at about 3.15 pm.

By 4.30 pm the Auster had not arrived. The Department of Civil Aviation checked with the Lutheran Mission to ask if there was any possibility that a change had been made in the flight plan, and when they were informed this was unlikely, emergency search and rescue action was begun. All Central Highlands radio posts were alerted, and the airstrip at Madang was lit for a night landing in case the Auster had been delayed. At first light the following morning, two aircraft began an air search, checking the Auster's flight planned route and all emergency landing strips between Asaroka and Madang. The search continued until nightfall, but there was no sign of the missing Auster.

Unknown to the outside world, about mid-afternoon that Monday, a native school teacher at a mission outpost in the mountains near the Asaroka Gap had seen an aircraft circling in and out of clouds in the vicinity of the gap, and had then heard a crash on the side of a

mountain. He sent two boys to report the fact to the mission station at Asaroka. They arrived the following morning about 10 am, a few minutes after the first search aircraft landed there.

As soon as this was conveyed to Goroka, a ground party was despatched to cover the area where the teacher thought the aircraft had crashed. Two missionaries, the Rev. Ralph Goldhardt and Mr Russell Shearer also set out from the mission station at Asaroka on horseback, but had to abandon their horses when the going became too rough. When darkness fell, they camped for the night in the jungle.

HARRY HARTWIG KILLED

The next morning they met up with the official search party, and they all pressed on, hoping to find the pilot alive. But their hopes were dashed at about 9 am, when they heard natives shouting from across the gorge that they had found the aeroplane, and that its pilot was dead.

The search party found the wreckage of the MAF Auster soon afterwards on the jungle-clad slopes of the mountain ridge about 300 feet below and to one side of the Asaroka Gap. Harry Hartwig had been killed instantly.

His body was buried on beautiful Graged Island in Madang Harbour, after a funeral service conducted by the Rev. Paul Freyberg of the Lutheran Mission.

The accident, coming so soon after such an enthusiastic beginning, itself the culmination of years of commitment and dedication, was a major blow to the aspirations of MAF-Australia and a source of bewilderment to its supporters. Despite his extensive wartime experience as a Coastal Command pilot flying four-engine aircraft over the Atlantic Ocean, Harry Hartwig had been killed. Why had it happened?

Plainly the tragedy could be classed as what is known in aviation as a weather accident - the result of an aircraft flying into weather conditions that, in combination with the terrain and visual flight techniques by which it is being flown, produces a potentially hazardous situation. Harry Hartwig's accident was by no means the only one of its type, either for MAF or aviation in general in Papua New Guinea. Its circumstances were those which have since become an all-too-familiar pattern with all classes of light aircraft operations in that most demanding of aviation environments.

By today's standards of course, the performance of an Auster would be considered grossly inadequate for the high-altitude operations necessary for safe flight in the New Guinea Highlands. In 1951 there was still much to be learnt concerning the dangers of flying in those Highlands, particularly in relation to weather and cloud conditions.

Harry Hartwig's accident was a tragic part of that learning process. Indeed, it is not exaggerating to say that the well recognised techniques of mountain and weather flying that are so much part of light aircraft operations in Papua New Guinea today, have all been learnt in this hard school of experience."

Harry's death so soon after his attempt to help to open up access to virtually inaccessible parts of New Guinea, such as the 'Hidden Valleys' as they are often called, was a great shock to all of us in MAF, family, friends, and supporters, but not necessarily to pilots who knew that New Guinea was one of the most dangerous parts of our planet for flying.

About a quarter of a century later, by which time MAF was, despite the hazards operating an effective and comparatively safe extensive air service over most of New Guinea, a New

Zealand pilot began flying there for MAF. His name is Roger Young. Many years ago he began writing up his flying experiences and now many many years later it has appeared as a book with remarkable graphic accounts of how flying in New Guinea is fraught with dangers.

The excerpt below from Roger Young's book MANY ADVENTURES FOLLOWED page 110 ,is printed here to show something of the horrific flying conditions experienced there. After reading this account I don't think anyone will doubt my claim about the extreme dangers of flying in New Guinea in those early days. It's difficult enough now. It was much harder to fly there in Harry's day, before anyone had spelt it out as clearly as Roger has done:

“The problem of totally unpredictable changes in the weather is again well illustrated with a flight I had undertaken for a Government Patrol Officer.

The run from Buka down to Wakunai was without incident and on the first flight over to Boku the weather was so nice that I had actually enjoyed the opportunity to fly an almost direct track over the Crown Prince Range. However, after I had unloaded the aircraft at Boku - and that took a bit of time as it was not easy cargo to handle - and started on the flight back across to the east coast I noticed that there was now a build-up of cloud along the top of the mountain range. So I proceeded with caution, and by the time I had reached the edge of the mountain range it was obvious that I would not be able to get over the top. Instead I would have to divert all the way down to the southern end of the island and then fly up the east coast in order to remain below the cloud. But before I even reached the southern end of the mountains I could see a line of tremendously heavy rainstorms sweeping in across the island from the eastern seaboard. They appeared to be travelling so fast that I doubted it would even be possible to return to Boku before the storm front beat me. In fact I judged that I might barely make it to the airstrip at Buin, so I had no choice but to make a straight-in approach there, as there was not enough time to fly a routine circuit over the airstrip first. As my wheels touched the ground at the northern end of Buin airfield the first rain-squall reached the parking bay on the eastern side of the airstrip, and before I had even finished the landing roll visibility was reduced to only a few yards. As I sat in the aircraft waiting for the rain to ease off, my shivering was not so much from cold but from fear. If that squall had beaten me, and obliterated my view of the strip before my wheels had touched the ground, then it would have created a very frightening situation with literally nowhere to go! I did not fancy a crash landing into any of the jungle around here!! “

10. Vic Ambrose

WWII Pathfinder Pilot - MAF New Guinea pioneer

Victor Maurice Ambrose was born in Wilmot, Tasmania on 6th April 1919, the son of Scottish migrants. He was brought up in the Christian Brethren Assemblies and from an early age was involved in Sunday School teaching.

At the outbreak of WWII he volunteered for the Australian Army, where he was first introduced to the sight of aeroplanes. Feeling that he was 'meant to be' in the Air Force he applied and was accepted as aircrew but not for pilot training. However, he persevered so much that he was eventually selected for pilot training. He did his Elementary Flying Training School course on Tiger Moths at Western Junction in Tasmania.

Joan Ambrose wrote:

"I first met Vic in 1942 at the church I attended. He was in the army, and was at Brighton Army Camp in southern Tasmania. Vic spent time assisting in the Hobart General Hospital gaining experience in theatre under Dr Rattan, the main surgeon at the time.

Vic was eventually in the Air Force where he did part of his training at Western Junction, near Launceston, Tasmania. Vic then went to Victoria and finally on to Canada and England.

Vic and I were married in 1947 after he had settled back into the family business in Tasmania."

Vic went on a US troopship that was returning to San Francisco after bringing American troops to Australia. From there he went by train to Vancouver, where they were transferred to the Canadian Pacific Railway for the long journey to the East. They went past the snow-capped Rocky Mountains, rivers, lakes and pine forests, then on over the rolling Prairies and finally after several days, to Canada's No 5 Service Flying Training School at Brantford, Ontario.

Four months later his course of Pupil Pilots graduated and were on their way to England. Soon after their arrival they heard about 176 Lancaster bombers that had been shot down by the Germans. It was alleged it was because a pilot accidentally left his intercom on air, thus giving the Nazis explicit details of their route.

Before Vic went on bombing missions over Europe, further training was required. He became a Wellington Captain before flying Stirlings and then Lancasters, ending up with the crack Pathfinder Force with No.83 RAF Squadron at Coningsby in Lincolnshire. Vic's bombing missions were very varied, including many oil refinery targets.

Vic became a leading bomber pilot on many night raids, including the bombing of canals, dams, factories and the bombing of Dresden.

Taking off just before dusk one evening Vic wrote:

"It was tremendous to see all the aircraft as far as the eye could see, and then feel isolated in total blackness as we entered the night ...and then our bombs and flack from the enemy again brilliantly illuminated the night sky".

The reflexes of this fine pilot, and the prompt action of the crew saved them from many potentially fatal situations, including an instance where they only had three minutes to act before their plane would blow up.

Vic was flying with the specialized elite 5 group of Pathfinders. The special force that was

developed to guide Bomber Command to its targets deep inside enemy occupied Europe. This group was made famous because of Guy Gibson and his Dambuster Squadron.

Vic piloted one of the Pathfinders that guided 1,000 bombers into the attack that has since been labelled as the Hiroshima of Europe - the raid on Dresden. It was Vic who dropped the initial flares over the city before the Mosquitos dropped their markers. Vic then had to wheel his plane around in that utter darkness to come in behind the bomber stream to drop his own bombs. Following that raid, his name was big news in the Tasmanian newspapers. On his return, it was Vic who led the local Anzac Day parade. Anzac Day (25th April) is remembered across Australia with a march or a remembrance service in almost all cities, towns and villages.

VIC AMBROSE IS CHALLENGED

In 1951, when the sad news of his friend Harry Hartwig's tragic death reached his ears in Australia, Vic felt compelled to continue the great work his friend had started.

Vic's contact with the Australian MAF executive soon led them all to believe that he should serve with MAF. In December 1952 he was asked to become MAF's Deputation Secretary. He was also asked to visit New Guinea with the authority of the Australian MAF Council to sort out a misunderstanding.

When he arrived he met Bob Hutchins and Charlie Mellis who had just returned from a visit to Dutch New Guinea, made at the request of the Unevangelized Fields Mission. At that time there was only one UFM station in Dutch New Guinea, just 65 miles to the Southeast of Hollandia, at a place called Sengge. This was one of the few places that could be reached overland if one was made of sterner stuff. Most of the area was cut-off by high mountains, crocodile infested rivers and jungle-covered lowlands.

Charlie told Vic about one family of six who were on the trail for two weeks before they finally reached Sengge. Carrier mules could not make it, so everything had to be carried on the backs of men, including the four young children. Sometimes for a whole day they would be wading in mud up to the top of their jungle boots. One of the four children was bitten by a snake. Her father slashed her skin, and put on a tourniquet. The little girl was sick for a few hours, but thankfully recovered in a day.

The next day Vic had lunch with Mary Lewis, the widow of Al, the Sealand pilot who had been a Canadian Air Force flying instructor of flying instructors. Vic had known Al. As they talked Mary showed Vic something Al had written, which he called: "THERE IS A LIGHT IN THE VALLEY". Resulting from that visit, Vic wrote in his book:

"The entry of the Gospel into that area, described as the most perilous mission frontier in the world, was not going to be achieved without sacrifice."

The years passed and, with the dedication of Vic and the other early pioneers of MAF and other missions, dramatic changes took place in New Guinea with huge numbers of 'stone age' people becoming devout Christians. As Vic foresaw when he visited the mourning widow of Al Lewis there would be a price to pay in that 'perilous mission frontier'.

RAPID GROWTH IN NEW GUINEA

By 1971, MAF was operating 16 aircraft from 11 bases with a field staff of almost 50. By 1973 the MAF fleet of aircraft had risen to 20 and the 23 pilots were flying around 16,000 hours a year. The year 1975, the year of PNG's Independence, was a year of great testing in Papua New Guinea, greater than had ever been experienced before. The Mt. Hagen

hangar was broken into numerous times. There were a number of sabotage attempts. In the space of only four weeks, MAF experienced three cases of severe engine problems, each of which proved to be the result of wilful interference.

But worse was to come the following year. It was, as Vic put it:

"A period that would go down in MAF history for its disastrous series of accidents, all of them within less than three months."

The first plane crashed on a mountain, the plane was a write-off but thankfully there were no injuries to the pilot, and only one of the four passengers was injured. The second was on a river. All five occupants were able to escape from the submerged cabin. They were rescued by canoes and an army barge making its way up the river. The third was high up at over 8,000 feet when a gap in the cloud over a ridge turned out not to be a gap at all, and with not enough room to make a sharp turn without getting into cloud the manoeuvre resulted in hitting a tree. Writing about it, Vic said:

"Miraculously, everyone was still alive. The pilot David Grace suffered a broken leg and a dislocated shoulder, the others escaped with lacerations and bruising. The first man on the scene expecting to find all the occupants dead exclaimed: 'Wok bilong big fella!' (God's doing)".

But worse was to come. Vic had been in New Guinea in regard to one of the previous accidents and was on his way back to Melbourne on a Qantas 707, soon to depart from Port Moresby when he was called to the flight deck urgently just before the 707 was to taxi out. A MAF plane was overdue and its crash beacon was transmitting. The control tower asked Vic to leave the Qantas flight and to transfer to the Mr. Hagen-bound Fokker Friendship, which, although already taxiing for take-off, was being recalled to take Vic on board.

A MAF CRASH - WITH NO SURVIVORS

As Vic put it:

"Soon after I arrived at Mt. Hagen, I learnt that wreckage had been sighted a short distance below a mountain ridge some 10 miles from Yankisa. A ground party which reached the site later that day found there were no survivors."

Mission staff reported previously unheard of reactions to the tragedy by Papua New Guinean people bereaved by the accident. One tribute in Pidgin was translated into English:

"We are very sorry to hear of the accident to the plane which has helped us so much in doing God's work. We are sorry too, that your pilot has died and we bear the heaviness of this along with you. But together we can place this heaviness into the hand of God. At this time we are happy that we can turn to help you in this way. You help in the work of God - and God will be with you all in it."

Vic wrote:

"Until this spate of accidents, MAF had enjoyed an enviable safety record, and our maintenance, training and operational procedures had been highly regarded by the aviation industry."

BALUS BILONG MIPELA

This is only a short profile of Vic Ambrose and readers must turn elsewhere to read about

the amazing results of mission in New Guinea. Vic's book **BALUS BILONG MIPELA** is a great source of detailed information.

In 1978, when Vic retired on his 60th birthday relinquishing his role as the CEO of Australian MAF, he summed up his many years of service,

"It had been interesting over the years to see the growth and development of MAF had been reflected in the gradual changes in my own responsibilities.

When I moved back from the field in 1957, where the emphasis had been on flying and management, I had resumed duties at head office where my days were taken up primarily with administration, speaking engagements, and flying last of all. Regular and frequent visits to the field for surveys, liaison, and involvement in the flying program, gradually gave way to occasional ferry flights to and from the field. Then, as more and more candidate pilots began training, they participated increasingly in the available ferry flights, and eventually there came the time when, on one field visit, I did not even fly an aeroplane!"

Vic's book published in 1987, ended with the words of the Australian MAF General Director, Jim Charlesworth, given at the 40th birthday of the formation of MAF Australia.

"Forty years is a long time for any organisation, and after such a period of development it is prudent to look seriously at a corporate plan for the years ahead, not simply in terms of the cold hard facts of a business enterprise, but rather by coming before the Lord and to seek His further direction.

Some of the early vision for MAF has been fulfilled as time has passed and, as in any developing work, should certainly not be perpetuated when the need no longer exists. Instead, we need to be constantly reviewing what is ahead to see where the Lord is widening our vision and extending the opportunities he is giving to us.

Certainly the work of MAF today, particularly in North and Central Australia and in Bangladesh, is very different to the informal, often personalised, support service we ran in early days for missionary societies working in Papua New Guinea. Yet this work, highly professional though it now is, is as much in keeping with MAF's original vision of missionary enterprise as any it has ever done. Even more so, because in making the transition from serving missionary societies to supporting indigenous churches and developing communities, MAF staff themselves have become the front line missionaries.

So, while MAF's primary objective remains as set out in our Memorandum of Association, to further the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have to recognise our original strategy, the role of serving missionary societies, is changing.

These newer areas of service and ways of working are likely to change too as time goes by. For example, it is likely that other opportunities for MAF will open up within Australia. And from Papua New Guinea after 40 years, we now have our first national commercial pilot and his wife, Jim and Greta Kauk, attending our 1987 Candidate Orientation Course.

So, the 40th anniversary of MAF's inauguration is a highly strategic time in our life. This is so for any organisation, which, to remain effective, needs to take stock of itself from time to time - if it is still doing what it was years ago, then it needs to ask why. The answer may be that it is valid to continue as before, but the question still needs to be asked.

This is the task before us now. It is a task not only for MAF's councillors and senior management - it is one for all who share a concern for MAF's ministry. For it is the power of prayer that makes the difference between the goals of a secular organisation, however outwardly successful, and one which faithfully fulfils the vocation God has given it."

After Vic's death in 2005 his granddaughter, Felicity Ambrose, wrote a biography, which

she ended with these words:

“Victor Ambrose left here on earth a mighty legacy of courage, faith and commitment. At his funeral were spoken many proud words of the fine man and Christian example that Vic had been to us all. His impressive reputation and solid character will continue to inspire many for years to come.”

MAF-AUSTRALASIAN OPERATIONS UPDATE

MAF Australia and MAF New Zealand

In 1951 MAF-Australia commenced their operations in Papua New Guinea. They were tackling one of the world's most difficult aviation environments. Despite significant improvements in aircraft equipment and the quality of the airstrips, the rugged terrain and unpredictable weather patterns still make flying extremely difficult. The MAF programme in PNG has developed a close link with many isolated communities and has become a vital part of the rural infrastructure. It is a testimony to the persistence of the MAF team that they are one of the very few operators in PNG who have an unbroken record of continuous flight operations over the last 60 years.

MAF Australia has developed other large flight operations within the continent of Australia itself and has been allowed to fly to the remote Aboriginal communities in the north and centre of the continent. It was MAF's high standard of operations and integrity that largely resulted in the permission to operate in these remote areas. MAF has been accepted into the life and work of these communities and the liaison has proved to be a most fruitful development. MAF Australia has recently started two other pioneer programmes in East Timor and Cambodia, helping to bring spiritual and physical assistance to many who would otherwise be virtually isolated from outside help. They also now manage the Bangladesh operation which had been started by MAF Europe.

The MAF New Zealand organisation that was started by Murray Kendon and Trevor Strong is now widely known and respected in New Zealand. Many New Zealanders have joined MAF-New Zealand to work with their Australian colleagues in these and in other countries. From the earliest days of the MAF Australia operations, pilots and engineers from MAF New Zealand have been an integral part of this MAF team. MAF-NZ's contribution to this work in the western Pacific has been invaluable throughout the 60 years of MAF flying in this area as well as providing staff for MAF operations in other parts of the world.

Since 2004 MAF Australia has been part of MAF International and has been working closely with MAF Europe in particular to establish common working practices and strategy.

11. GORDON MARSHALL DFC

Korean War South African Air Force Mustang pilot who devoted over 20 years to flying for Mission Aviation Fellowship in many African equatorial countries.

Gordon was ten and I was 17 when he was brought to our farm, Karoo, near Cradock, South Africa. Gordon was the son of a Baptist minister serving in Grahamstown a hundred miles to the south of us. He became ill and came to the dry Karoo for some of his schooling to regain his health. Soon after he arrived I gave up farming and went to Cape Town, 500 miles south, to train for Christian service at the Bible Institute of South Africa. That was just before WWII began when I then joined the South African Air Force to become a WWII pilot.

Meanwhile Gordon left Cradock and finished his schooling in Boksburg near Johannesburg. After a brief time in a bank, which he found boring, he also joined the SAAF and trained as a pilot. He won his pilot's wing in October 1945 on Harvards, just before he turned 18.

By then WWII was over and he was posted to the Durban SAAF Air base where he flew Spitfires. He sometimes flew over the family farm 90 miles away towards the Drakensburg Mountains to do some stunts to impress his mother!

In 1947 he was posted to Langebaanweg SAAF airbase on the west coast of South Africa to the north of Cape Town when the Royal family were visiting South Africa. Princess Elizabeth celebrated her 21st birthday in Cape Town on the 12th April and Gordon was one of two SAAF young lieutenants who was chosen to attend the party. But Gordon said he didn't get a chance to dance with the princess!

The years passed before Gordon and I met again in 1947. Gordon at this time was a second pilot in the large lumbering four engine Sunderland sea planes that were moored in Durban's large harbour basin. I went up with him once and enjoyed the take-off and landing on water for the first time, but had no desire to fly such a plane. My spray pilot flying at tree-top level was much more exhilarating.

It was only when Gordon took me up in a Harvard that I realized what a great and daring pilot he was. In my book **'Beaufighters Over the Balkans'** I gave an account of that hair-raising low level flying experience! Also while flying Harvards in Durban, Gordon experienced an engine failure over the sea. Fortunately the runway for the new Louis Botha airport had been cleared and Gordon did a dead stick belly-up landing, which prompted headlines the next day

"SAAF unofficially opens Louis Botha airport".

After I left Natal to fly on the Berlin Airlift, Gordon and I met up again when we were both posted to the SAAF Central Flying School, which at that time was on the far east of the Gold Reef in the Transvaal. Gordon was instructing on Harvards and I was on DC3 Dakotas. Soon afterwards I resigned my commission with the SAAF and went to fly with MAF in the Sudan and Gordon was posted to Korea to fly on combat missions on Mustang P51s.

When the South Africans arrived in Korea, they were welcomed by the Americans with an all black band. This had been especially arranged because the American expected to be welcoming a black SAAF squadron, but at that time there were no black pilots in the SAAF! And not too many, for that matter, in the USAF either.

The Americans expected the SAAF pilots to be novice pilots, little knowing that many of them were highly experienced and often decorated WWII pilots. They got a rude awakening

when SAAF's famous No.2 Squadron's Commandant S. van Breda Theron DSO, DFC and AFC demonstrated aerobatic manoeuvres the like of which they had never seen before. On landing he was surrounded by an admiring group of Americans, among whom was a senior officer who said:

"Commandant we can't teach you anything about flying".

South Africa put 800 men into the three-year Korean conflict. Thirty-four pilots were killed, including a number of my friends. Between them they earned 55 American DFCs, two US Silver Stars and two Presidential citations from America and Korea, among other medals. The South African presence led to the USAF Fighter Bombing wing playing the opening bars of South Africa's famous "Die Stem" (The Voice) at all their retreat ceremonies. The United Nations lost more than 142,000 men in Korea.

When I read accounts of Gordon Marshall's combat flying in Korea, I think it was a miracle that he survived and I am not surprised that the Americans awarded him their Distinguished Flying Cross.

In July 1951 Gordon took off leading four Mustangs to a target, from what was known as K-16. While heading for their target, a Mosquito controller was heard making a desperate call for help with an urgent close support task. Gordon, who was always known to his SAAF friends as Gus, responded to that call and the controller diverted him to a concentration of communist troops on the south bank of the Imjin River. The enemy was entrenched in difficult terrain and armed with numerous automatic weapons and anti-aircraft batteries.

When Gordon found the target and they made their first attack, the flak was so intense that the controller expected aircraft casualties and instructed a USAF flight to stand by to cover a rescue operation. Nevertheless Gus and his three SAAF Mustang pilots, John Howe, Jessie Verster and Larry Eager made a series of skilfully co-ordinated attacks on the target. John Howe and Jessie Verster expressed their surprise at their survival.

Gus, for his brilliant leadership was awarded the American DFC and the others received the American Air Medals. Gordon told my friend Peter Bagshaw for the book he and Dermot Moore were writing: "South Africa's Flying CHEETAHS IN KOREA":

"I volunteered to join 2 Squadron in Korea because I thought it would be an exciting adventure and it certainly was. After a month of operations I had an experience that was to change the entire course of my life".

Gordon went on to tell of the day when he became separated from another Mustang and was returning to base just under the cloud base at 1,000 feet. Below him he saw what looked like a long line of army ants moving slowly in the snowbound countryside. Flying lower he saw that thousands of people were walking along the main railway line. They were carrying bundles on their backs and were dressed in white clothing. Flying closer, Gordon saw that they were plodding through slush barefoot.

These pathetic people were refugees who had left their homes and most of their possessions without any promise for a future livelihood or existence.

KOREAN POVERTY CHALLENGES GORDON

Gordon saw how inadequately dressed they were for such cold conditions and that many of the aged and the children must have been suffering dreadfully. He wrote in the book:

"Something happened to me that day that related to my own spiritual life and the future. I had become a Christian believer at the age of six and had deep convictions about the reality of God and I knew that He had a plan for my life. This, coupled with the experience

of seeing those thousands of people in dire need made me vow that I would offer the rest of my life to serve God and help such people. The day would come when I would no longer fly warplanes but devote my time as either a missionary or a minister.”

After surviving the Korean War where many of his and my friends died, Gordon was returned to South Africa and wrote in the book:

“Back home I found myself at the Central Flying School once more and then one day I became restless. It was the memory of those miserable Korean refugees trudging through the snow, not knowing when they would eat again. I kept my promise to God and by March 1952 started flying missionaries in Southern Sudan.”

GORDON JOINS US IN THE SUDAN

It was at that time, immediately after Gordon returned to South Africa, that I began feeling that Gordon, being a single man, might well be sent back to Korea again and I had the strong feeling that if that happened he would not survive. I recalled the Scripture that says: *“He that takes up the sword, will die by the sword”*.

I wrote to Gordon from our MAF base at Doro close to the Ethiopian border in the deep south of Sudan, asking him if he too would resign his commission with the SAAF and join us in MAF. This became urgent when I suddenly lost most of the sight of my right eye, with a detached retina.

Gordon did just that and was soon with us. That began a long period of over 20 years of flying with MAF in Africa. In his early air force flying Gordon flew Vampire jets without ear muffs, which were not part of their gear in those days. It is thought that it was the noise of those engines that began to damage his ears. But when his hearing began to fail he had to give up flying and went back to South Africa to build up the MAF home base in Johannesburg, as I had done in London.

Gordon's coming to be with us in the Sudan in those early days of the 1950s is recorded in the 16 mm sound colour film that Stuart King produced "CONFLICT IN THE SKY". I used it to great effect all over UK in schools and churches. It certainly was a great tool to use to help build a firm foundation for what MAF has now become.

Some of Gordon's story is told in Stuart King's "HOPE HAS WINGS". Years later I met up with Gordon in Chad where he was flying an amphibious Cessna. We flew up to one of the remotest parts of Africa, to the north of Lake Chad close to the south of the Sahara. It was great flying over the huge Lake Chad knowing that in the rare event of an engine failure, there was water below us all the time on which to make a safe landing. Gordon let me land the Cessna on Lake Chad. It was the first time I had ever landed a plane on water.

Gordon's skill as a pilot was needed before the day was over.

Quite soon after leaving the lake on our flight back to our Chadian base at Fort Lamy, as the capital was known in those days, the engine suddenly sputtered and went dead. My eyes scoured the ground to find somewhere to land, but there were too many trees.

Suddenly Gordon shouted, *“I think we can get down there”*, pointing with his finger. There to our left he had spotted a small open area that looked far too short to me for a landing. Gordon turned towards it and made a perfect 'dead stick' approach, dropping the Cessna over a tree. But there was a large tree ahead of us. Providentially landing on soft sandy soil on tiny wheels protruding from the floats, we came to a fairly abrupt stop just ten yards from the tree. Had we hit it, the Cessna would have been a write-off and Gordon, myself and our MAF engineer Tim Longley would probably all have been killed. We thanked the Lord for his protection and I appreciated as never before Gordon's skill as a pilot. That incident is

told more fully with many great photos in **Early Wings Over Africa.**

Sadly Gordon, who was much younger than me, died a few years ago after a lifelong service to needy people and to God. His lovely second generation missionary wife, Jean, died a year and a half later. They are greatly missed.

12. Steve Stevens DFC

MAF's first operational pilot in Africa

I was born soon after the end of WWI at Amesbury, close to where my father, Lt. George Stevens of the West Yorkshire regiment was based at Salisbury Plain, England. My mother Dora had also served in WWI as a VAD nurse.

When I was six weeks old, my father's regiment moved to York for three years and then to Germany to be part of the British Army of Occupation.

While in Cologne my mother, riding one of my father's horses, had a dreadful riding accident requiring eleven stitches in her head. My father had been badly gassed at Salonica in WW1 and his health deteriorated resulting in him being given an extended period of sick leave. Within a couple of years the West Yorkshire regiment was on the move again, this time to India. The Medical Officer did not think my father would survive in that humid climate so my father, a regular Army Officer, who had been trained at Sandhurst Military College was invalided out of the army.

In November 1929 when I was ten, we set sail for sunny South Africa from Southampton getting off at Cape Town. The dry climate of the Great Karoo was recommended. So a few days later after being shown the beauty spots of Cape Town, including going up to the top of Table Mountain in the new cable car, we set off on our long drive of 500 miles to a place called Cradock. None of the country roads were tarred in those days. As we drove in the country, we saw many snakes basking in the hot African sun on the roads.

As schooling for me presented a problem, and because my parents were not particularly enamoured with the dry Karoo, we were off again to Grahamstown where I went to St. Andrews preparatory school for a while.

Then we moved again, this time to Natal where my father bought a small farm. We were there for three years, but when my mother died of a tumour on the brain, probably due to that riding accident many years earlier, my father sold the farm and we moved to Johannesburg. When my father developed pneumonia and nearly died, he became convinced that the only place for him with this lung problem was the Great Karoo. I was sixteen and left the Commercial College in Johannesburg to go farming with my father.

After three years on the irrigation farm with our herd of pedigree Guernsey cows, imported from the Channel Island of this name, I decided that I wanted to train for Christian service and left for the Bible Institute of South Africa in Cape Town.

It was during our time in humid Natal that my father, my mother and I had all become Christians. Our lives were completely revolutionised and we attended Christian meetings a few miles away from our farm at Murchison Mission Hospital where the Scottish missionaries who had introduced us to the Christian faith lived and worked.

The next 18 months at Bible College were some of the most important of my long life. I owe a great debt of gratitude to that College and our wonderful lecturers.

It was while I was a student there that WWII broke out.

TEN YEARS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE

The Bible Institute closed for the duration of the war and many of us joined the forces as volunteers as there was no conscription. I really hoped that I could become a Spitfire pilot! My elementary flying training on Tiger Moths was at Baragwaneth, close to Johannesburg. This was followed by advanced flying training on very old Hawker variants - mostly Harts

and Hinds and a few Audaxes. The Advanced Flying Training School (AFTS) which I attended was close to the diamond mining town of Kimberley.

Unfortunately I came top of this advanced course, I say 'unfortunately' because instead of becoming a Spitfire pilot I was selected to become a flying instructor on Tiger Moths based at an Elementary Flying Training School in the Transvaal.

Some months later, I was disciplined for 'dog-fighting' by being made an aircraft controller at the coal-mining town of Witbank, watching others flying Tiger Moths, but not allowed to fly myself. After that I became a flying instructor again, this time on twin-engine Airspeed Oxfords in Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal. I loved training my AFTS pupil pilots to fly Oxfords because it was so much more relaxing than training elementary pupils on Tiger Moths.

It was not until the middle of 1944 that I was eventually released from flying instructing duties for active service in Italy on rocket-firing Beaufighters, which were fitted with wonderful nose cameras. These provided some outstanding photos for my first book **BEAUFIGHTER OVER THE BALKANS** (available from me at discount prices or from UK bookshops). Within the first few days of our arrival on the Adriatic coast of Italy with 19 Squadron of the South African Air Force (SAAF) six of us were airborne in three Beaufighters flying on a training flight at treetop level. We only just escaped being killed when we unexpectedly came upon a line of high-tension electricity cables. We only missed them by hauling back on our control columns and slamming the throttles forward to full power.

On my very first rocket firing attack on Nazi held barracks deep inside occupied Yugoslavia (as it was then called), a 20mm German anti-aircraft shell was only stopped from blowing my head off by a protective 15 by 19 inch armoured glass plate that was three inches thick. The little Bible that my parents had given me had part of Psalm 91 inscribed in it. I knew that they were claiming the promises of that great 'Deliverance Psalm' on my behalf. In just two days I could have been killed twice! That I survived to carry out over thirty low level attacks was, I'm convinced, because my parents were constantly praying for my deliverance. Many of my aircrew colleagues were shot down and either killed or taken prisoner. At the end of WWII I was posted to an SAAF Transport Squadron to fly Dakotas from Pretoria up to Cairo. The journey took us five long days in that slow aircraft as there were no night landing facilities for most of those five thousand miles. After two days of rest in a Cairo hotel we flew back, another five days, with our load of SAAF servicemen. Many of these servicemen had been prisoners of war. I soon became well acquainted with the terrain from the air and from the many en-route stops that we made between Egypt and S. Africa. On these return flights the location of the night stops varied considerably as we had to land at airfields where there was sufficient accommodation for all the servicemen. It was at this time that I first met missionaries in **Khartoum** who told me how desperate they were for an air service for pioneer missionaries some four hundred miles away in the flooded South Sudan. It was then, in **1946**, that my vision of '**aircraft for missions**' was born.

After we had flown all the servicemen back home, my flying days came to an end for a while. I was put on all sorts of courses that I didn't like. One was a 'Combat Course' that I was fortunate to survive! Due to the youth and inexperience of the soldiers I was leading, one of them fired his Sten Gun into a rock. The bullet ricocheted and part of it became embedded in the flesh at the back of my neck. Though my injuries were not serious I could have been killed.

Next came a 'Wireless Operators Course' that bored me stiff, thus it was a real thrill when I was posted to Natal to become a SAAF Spray Pilot. I knew that it would be dangerous

spraying DDT at treetop level but I didn't mind the risks as I would be flying again.

I heard later that an organisation called **Mission Aviation Fellowship** had come into being in London. I contacted them and told them of the needs in what was then called the **Anglo-Egyptian Sudan**. From my experience of the Cape to Cairo route I was convinced that the **South Sudan** was the area of greatest need and should be given the top priority. I offered to fly for MAF should they agree to start an air service for missions in the Sudan. After MAF-UK's air survey of the Sudan and surrounding countries by Jack Hemmings and Stuart King in **1948**, they did indeed decide to start with the South Sudan. Sometime later I was invited to be MAF-UK's first operational pilot for missions in that vast country. Because of lack of finance it had not been possible for my 1946 vision for an organisation such as MAF to quickly come into being.

Kay and I were married in Natal in 1947 and we prepared ourselves for Christian service by reading many missionary biographies. At the time I was based in Zululand at a remote little railway siding village with three game reserves nearby. We were spraying the dangerous DDT from our old war-weary Anson aircraft at tree top level to kill the dreaded Tsetse flies that were such a threat to the African game. The cattle of the Zulu were also at risk and even the Zulu themselves were in danger of being infected with the dangerous 'sleeping sickness' disease. Victims would lose their body weight and eventually die of malnutrition.

Then one day, to my utter surprise, I was summoned to my commanding officer's office and informed that I was to be flown to Pretoria to join other DC3 Dakota pilots for an airlift in Germany. The description of the next weeks' of flying in Germany was what I wrote later when a national British newspaper asked me.

The Berlin Airlift Prevented WWII

Berlin Airlift pilot, Steve Stevens DFC, a WWII rocket-firing Beaufighter pilot flew over one hundred **DC3 Dakota** loads of supplies to Berlin to help save two-and-a-half-million West Berliners from being starved to death by Stalin's blockade of Berlin. The **Berlin Airlift** saved the world from a third World War.

Three years after WWII, Steve Stevens looks back upon the greatest peacetime flying enterprise the world has ever seen.

Stalin was determined to oust the allies with their 12,000 troops from allied occupied Berlin. It was reputed that the Russians had 300,000 troops in that part of Russian held East Germany. Stalin could have taken Berlin in a day!

Stalin knew that to capture occupied Berlin by force could lead to a third world war. A blockade was the perfect option, so the Russian army closed all access from western Germany to Berlin by rail, road and river. It was suddenly completely closed. Stalin knew that Berliners could not survive without massive supplies from the West, including huge supplies of coal for the power stations. The '**Cold War**' had begun!

The **London Agreement** had been signed by Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and France, when they were allies against German Nazism. In accordance with the agreement Germany was to be temporarily divided up between them with each also controlling a section of Berlin. However, after 1947 relations between Russia and the Western allies deteriorated to such an extent that it was feared that there might be a WWII. Stalin indicated his intentions to take control of all of Germany and the first step in that direction was to take all of Berlin.

Fortunately for Russia, the London Agreement did not prevent a blockade. There was only one way open for the other three powers to prevent the west Berliners from being starved to death - *A Berlin Airlift*. The main problem for the West, however was that they did not have any suitable aircraft. Steve Stevens was convinced that a Divine miracle would be needed. Another significant problem was that there were not enough airfields in West Berlin.

Tempelhof airfield was used by the Americans. The RAF, with whom our South African Air force contingent was flying, operated into Gatow. We desperately needed another airfield and a site was found called Tegel. 17,000 Berliners worked 'flat out' to bring it into being as soon as possible.

It is amazing that only 39 RAF men and 31 Americans died on the Airlift. To me flying under such conditions with so few casualties convinces me that God did indeed give us a miracle.

Stalin intended to keep Germany weak. By the beginning of the Berlin Blockade it was not only Russia that feared an economically revived Germany, but also the other powers. Both sides would like to have taken over the control of Germany. According to Stalin's daughter her father saw "enemies everywhere" even among his closest associates. He believed that the capitalist world was determined to destroy the communist state. Stalin's principal aim was therefore to keep Germany weak so that it could never again attack the Soviet Union.

Stalin's main fear was from the revived German power united with that of his capitalist foes. In his eyes the **Marshall Plan** of rebuilding Germany could lead to Germany becoming powerful once more. By the end of 1947 it was clear that East and West were deadlocked over Germany's future.

The blockade of west Berlin caught the other powers by surprise. A US official had said publicly in Jan 1948 "*the Soviets are not so foolish as to deliberately and foolishly starve the people of west Berlin*". Five months later on 18th June it was announced in the Western Zones that there was to be a currency reform. At this point Stalin became very alarmed and became intent that a blockade must achieve the capitulation of west Berliners by them being starved to death.

On the 12th June the American President Truman had ruled out any consideration of withdrawing the 12,000 troops from Berlin saying "*We are staying*". Early in July, when the British Chiefs of Staff pressed the Minister of Defence, to ask Prime Minister Atlee if the government would "*go to war over the Berlin issue*" his answer was vague. But Atlee indicated that "*It would be prudent for the military to plan on the assumption that there might be a war*".

The efficiency of operating the Berlin Airlift was very impressive. At the departure airfield of Lubeck, where I was based in the British sector, we operated only one of the many types of aircraft used in the airlift. It was my favourite plane – the twin engine Dakota that I had flown on the Cape to Cairo route so many times in 1946 when bringing back our South African troops to their homeland. From Lubeck the only cargo we carried was coal. From Fassbourg in the American sector only food was carried.

Major General Tunner, had gained airlift experience during WWII against the Japanese. 'Over the Hump', was an airlift over the Himalayan mountains from India to China. He used that experience to good effect during the Berlin Airlift. At one of the bases two different types of aircraft were operating at the same altitude in our narrow flying corridor. As this was so complicated he found a way for both aircraft

to fly at the same cruising speed without damage to the engines. 'Standardisation' was Tunner's passion. Without his ability and General Clay's diplomatic abilities the Berlin Airlift would have not have been a successful venture.

On 15th Feb. 1949, after establishing points for an agreement between the British Soviets, Britain, USA and France, a US diplomat negotiated with his Soviet counterpart at the United Nations in New York. A month later they started serious negotiations to end the Blockade. An agreement came at the end of April to lift the Blockade on 12th May 1949.

To be safe and to build up Berlin's stockpiles a reduced **Airlift** continued beyond those ten months. We continued until end of September. At Lubeck, we flew our last load into Berlin with these words from the Bible's book of Psalms.

"For they intended evil against thee. They imagined a mischievous device that they were unable to perform"

The Berlin Gratitude Foundation invited a thousand overseas guests from Britain, USA, Australia and South Africa, to their thanksgiving celebrations in 1999. I was one of those invited. We were treated like royalty and were given 'red carpet' honour. I gave the thousand English speaking guests who were there a copy of an article I had written especially for this reunion entitled 'The Berlin Airlift Miracle'. High-ranking Berliners such as the Mayor of Berlin, who spoke some English, accepted copies. I wanted everyone to become convinced that the Berlin Airlift was indeed a great miracle.

The Berlin Airlift remains without parallel in the history of Airlift and of humanitarian operations. The US Secretary of State said *"Western leaders and members of the Airlift taskforce preserved both peace and West Berlin's freedom. They established a tenuous balance in Europe and inspired resistance to totalitarianism. The first step in the long road to 9th Nov. 1989 (The removal of the Berlin Wall) began with the Berlin Airlift."*

While on the Berlin Airlift in 1949 I was able to make face-to-face contact with Stuart King. As MAF was so short of money they were unable to offer me a salary – MAF did not even have enough money for my airfare to Sudan! So Kay and I skimped and saved as much money as we could and by 1950 we had saved £2000 out of a monthly salary of only £84.

In September 1950 Stuart King telegraphed from the Sudan asking me to come to fly the second hand De Havilland Rapide that Jack Hemmings had flown to Khartoum, the capital of the Sudan. By this time I had obtained the top pilot's licence (the Airline Transport Licence) and I was ready to resign my S. African Defence Force Permanent Commission. By then our first two children had been born. Coleen was only a few weeks old when I left Kay to go to the Sudan. Kay had been ill with kidney problems so our whole future was in the balance. Kay was a widow when I married her and had been left with a baby girl, there would now be five of us to feed.

Unlike the other eleven profiles in this book, mine does not major on actual flying with MAF because it is all told in detail in my fully illustrated large size book about MAF's early days. It is entitled 'Early Wings over Africa' and has been enthusiastically welcomed around the world as a sequel to my first autobiography 'Beaufighter over the Balkans'.

The events of those dramatic pioneering MAF days in the Sudan that nearly took four of our five lives are deeply etched in my memory. In the end, we were there for only three years due to health problems that included my losing most of the sight of one eye. We then

worked for 17 years in the UK building up a strong support base for MAF and looking for additional pilots, engineers and other staff for our expanding work in the Sudan that soon spread to Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Chad and continued to penetrate parts of Africa that are remote or difficult to reach.

MAF has now become larger than most air charter companies. It is now a small airline!

INTO THE UNKNOWN

I will conclude with a brief account of the first MAF flight in Africa.

It was in November 1950 that Stuart King and I attempted to fly the first missionaries into a remote area that had never been located from the air.

The Sudan government asked the RAF to attempt to locate five mission outposts 400 miles south of Khartoum, close to the Ethiopian border. The RAF did not have any success in finding the mission outposts. If the RAF had failed would we be any more successful?

Herb Major, an American Sudan Interior Mission missionary with his wife and two little children, had just returned to Khartoum from America. The six month 'dry season' in the south Sudan had just ended. The 'rainy season' when six feet of rain would fall and water from the mountains of Ethiopia would flood that part of the south Sudan had begun.

Herb had to leave his wife, Mary Ethel, and his two children, Elizabeth and John in Khartoum and struggle down to Doro, his mission outpost. He had to go some of the way by trader's truck, and when the tracks became water-logged he had to walk and then he rode a mule through lion and leopard country. Under those conditions he would never have been able to take his wife and children to Doro with him. On recovering his strength, Herb explored the forested area around his outpost and found a flattish area on slightly higher dry ground that would be good for an airstrip. He called the tribal chiefs together and they were keen to have a 'great bird' land at Doro, so Herb was able to persuade the chiefs to provide the manpower and to begin work on the airstrip right away, about a thousand Mabaan tribesmen helped with their hoes and axes, clearing a place for us to land. It was a mammoth task!

Herb then sent a runner 60 miles north, through the flooded area to the nearest telegraph office at Kurmuk to send a telegram to us saying that the landing airstrip was ready. We had told him our specifications, but as Herb was not a pilot we wondered if his airstrip would be suitable. Normally we would have trekked in ourselves to inspect the airstrip, but by then with so much of the area flooded and such a long distance away we had no option but to check the airstrip with a few low-level inspection flights. Our main challenge was to locate Doro and the new airstrip!

We did find it but with difficulty. Our map was useless and our compass bearings did not get us to Doro. So we then began a square search. Shortly afterwards when Herb heard the drone of our plane's engines he lit a great 'smoke fire'. It was a great relief to us to find Doro and land safely. It was a time of great rejoicing for the Major family to be reunited. The tribal people were very excited to have a 'great bird' land in their midst. They came for miles to see it. Herb and his thousand helpers had done very well.

MAF-SOUTH AFRICA OPERATIONS UPDATE.

MAF South Africa has its headquarters and hangar at Lansaria Airport in Pretoria. Currently there are flight operations based in Angola, Lesotho, Madagascar and Mozambique. The more sophisticated light aviation infrastructure of South Africa means

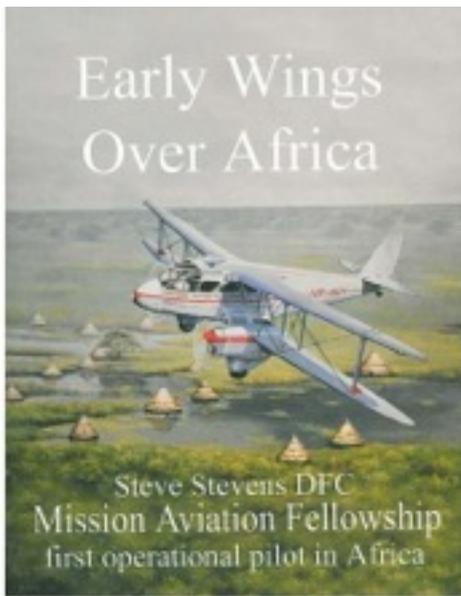
that MAF aircraft from these and other African countries are sometimes flown to Johannesburg for specialised maintenance that is beyond the resources of local MAF engineers.

In 2007 the MAF Training Base for the African region was set up in Lansaria to provide in-house advanced training – mainly for existing MAF pilots. The Johannesburg area allows pilots to be exposed to a full range of African conditions. One day a MAF pilot might be flying the most sophisticated instrument approach behind an international airliner while the next day experiencing a variety of short, soft or sloping bush airstrips.

Instructors from MAF's Lansaria airport Training Base also carry out renewal and competency checks on other MAF pilots – sometimes travelling thousands of miles to other African countries. This is necessary to ensure that the instructors are kept up to date with the local conditions in each country. A comprehensive series of training and operations manuals has now been developed so that MAF operations throughout the region achieve consistently high standards. However, it seems likely that this Training Base will soon be moved further to the north (possibly to Uganda) in order to be located closer to the heart of MAF's Africa operations.

Gordon Marshall was the first full time director of MAF-South Africa and close links have been developed with many South African churches, The MAF stand is a familiar site at air shows across the country.

Despite a somewhat more sophisticated transport infrastructure than many other parts of Africa, the southern Africa region has had its share of war and natural disasters. Gordon Marshall's experience of sighting fleeing refugees in the Korean War is, sadly, still being paralleled today in parts of this area. The help that MAF teams can bring to such acute situations is vital to enhance the physical and spiritual well-being of such vulnerable people.



This is Steve Stevens' second flying autobiography.

In 1946 in Khartoum, God challenged Steve to provide an aerial life line for mission.

In 1950 he became MAF's first operational pilot in Africa with Stuart King as engineer.

This large format coffee table sized, fully illustrated book has 100 photos including some of African animals to give the flavour of Africa.

It shows what a great tool for the good of mankind a plane can be.

It is written as a challenge to service in Africa where the risk of martyrdom still exists today.

It tells of the six missionaries from Britain who went to Africa soon after the days of David Livingstone. In only a few years they were all dead, it also tells of missionaries struggling to penetrate a jungle rainforest to reach isolated Ethiopians. Now, 50 years later, more than half of this remote tribe are Christians.

The book closes with the amazing story of the Amazonian Auca (Waodani) Indians who killed MAF pilot Nate Saint and his four missionary colleagues. It answers the question – why did they kill those who were coming to help them?

It is an exciting and challenging book!