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From dugout canoe to Twin Otter...

VANIMO, Papua New Guinea – Isolated for generations by vast swamplands and rugged escarpments, people in PNG's interior villages are labouring with simple tools to build aircraft landing strips.

Their dugout canoes are still important for reaching their neighbours, but they know that air service via MAF Twin Otter or Cessna 206 provides access to schools, health care and markets for local produce.

Without the use of modern earth-moving equipment, landing strips typically take many people many years to build. That's why once an airstrip has been completed, its official opening is a time for great celebration.

Canadian pilot Richard Marples, his wife Jennifer and their three children were able to participate in an airstrip opening this year. The family is from Kingston, Ontario, and lives at the MAF base in Vanimo in northern PNG, near the border with Indonesia and only 2.7 degrees south of the equator.

In remote areas of the world, where commercial flights are not available, MAF provides flights for missionaries, local pastors, humanitarian aid and economic development – so that all people can have access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the resources to meet their needs.

Worldwide, MAF has about 150 aircraft serving 30 nations.



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In Papua New Guinea ... The Marples family of Kingston, Ontario, settles into a dugout canoe with two other families for the five-minute trip from a new airstrip to Yabru village.

Reaching out across PNG

Most of Papua New Guinea's 5.4 million people live in small isolated villages, unconnected by roads. Because extremely rugged terrain makes road building uneconomical, and safety on the few existing roads is a concern wherever gangs of so-called "rascals" operate, aviation has developed to the extent that PNG now has 559 aircraft landing strips. All but 21 are unpaved.

Across this nation, which is a little larger than Newfoundland, MAF has four Twin Otters and 10 smaller Cessna 206 aircraft in service. Due to arrive soon is a new Australian-made Grippsland Aeronautics GA8 Airvan, an economical alternative to the Cessna 206.

"MAF is using aircraft to enable God's kingdom to be extended," says Bill Harding, chief executive of MAF Australia, which oversees the PNG flight program. "And we are positioning our staff in communities where otherwise there might be no Christian presence or outreach."

Last year, MAF aircraft landed at 340 airstrips in PNG. More than 7,600 passengers were church or mission staff receiving subsidized fares. In addition, 450 adults and 30 children received medical evacuations from remote villages to health care centres. MAF also transported 590 tonnes of produce – mostly coffee and vegetables – to market.

Canada's Richard Marples reports that this year he was able to add two new creatures to the list of live animals he has transported in MAF aircraft during his years in PNG. Tree kangaroo and goat are the newest additions, joining crocodile, dog, pig, snake, cassowary, fish, chicken, Guria bird, cockatoo, parrot, duck and cuscus. A cuscus is a possum-like animal and a Guria bird is a brightly coloured crowned pigeon. The tree kangaroos were part of a conservation education program, while the goats were flown in for use as breeders in two separate milk production projects.



Checklist ... Pilot Richard Marples welcomes passengers boarding an MAF plane.



Background photo ... Air service is important in PNG because the entire nation has only 700 km of paved roadway.



New airstrip ... An MAF Twin Otter and SIL Islander sit in the background during the opening of Yabru airstrip.



Welcome ... People at Ok Isai village in PNG greet the arrival of the MAF Twin Otter.

From dugout canoe to Twin Otter...

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"The airstrip at Yabru was built entirely by the local people, entirely by manual labour," says Richard, a Twin Otter captain. This was his first opportunity to attend an official opening in more than five years of flying for MAF in PNG.

"It was also a good opportunity for Jennifer and the children to see a little more firsthand the people that we are here to serve," he adds.

High demand for MAF flights around the world usually excludes staff families from such events, so Richard and Jennifer were thankful this opening was scheduled on a quiet August weekend ahead of PNG's busy October-to-March flying season.

Yabru village is a cluster of more than 25 tiny spread-out communities where a total of about 4,550 people speak the Abau language.

The new airstrip helps out Bible translators Arjen and Maija Lock, who have worked at Yabru through SIL International since 1982. Arjen is from the Netherlands, and Maija from Finland.

Before the airstrip was built, the Locks had to journey four hours – one hour on foot plus three hours by dugout canoe – to reach the next-nearest airfield at Green River, about 10 km away.

"The Locks are aiming for the end of 2005 for completion of the translation," Richard reports. "It has been a lifetime's work – 23 years for just one of the 700 languages of Papua New Guinea!"

On Friday, August 6, festivities at Yabru began with an estimated 700 people gathered together to watch the *JESUS* film on a large outdoor screen. This film, an initiative of the late Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for

Christ, has been translated into 874 languages since its release in 1979.

On Saturday, after the ribbon-cutting ceremony and speeches, the local people held archery contests, ran races and climbed greased poles for fun while vegetables and pork, wrapped in banana leaves, baked on hot stones, mumu-style.

The Marples family had to depart Yabru before the food was served, but as a parting gift, Jennifer was handed a package of raw pork wrapped in banana leaves.

MAF has three pilots providing flights out of Vanimo. Serving with Richard are Dirk Markesteijn from the Netherlands and Yong Kim from South Korea. Their twin turboprop operates with a captain, first officer, cabin attendant and up to 19 passengers, or it can carry almost two tonnes of cargo.

Six national staff members are employed by MAF at Vanimo, including John Bekopwai, a traffic officer and cabin attendant who was especially excited to attend the Yabru airstrip opening because he originally comes from this village.

"God I laikim tumas man meri bilong dispela graun..."

This is the beginning of John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world...") in Tok Pisin, which has become the most widely used of Papua New Guinea's 700 languages.

Two weeks in the life of MAF Angola

Four Canadian pilots live in Angola, Africa, to provide MAF flights from Lubango airport. Here's a glimpse into their lives as they meet the daily challenges of running an MAF program –

Saturday, Sept. 4, 2004 Gary Toews and Fred Heier, both pilot/engineers, finished a maintenance inspection on C-GWOH, the MAF Angola Caravan aircraft.

Sunday, Sept. 5, 2004 MAF staff attended church services in Lubango. At 2 p.m., Gary and Fred flew out 11 large cans of paint for the hospital at Kalukembe, and then brought back five passengers, including a Swiss pastor and his parents. The parents had worked at Kalukembe from 1953 to 1957.

Monday, Sept. 6, 2004 Gary and Fred departed in C-GWOH for World Food Program flights to Menongue and Mavinga, where Halo Trust has a land mine removal project and Médecins sans Frontières operates a hospital/feeding centre. The return flight had a full load of passengers, including two from the Angolan Congregational Church. Through this church, the Irish government is sponsoring a seed project near Mavinga.

Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2004 Gary and Fred departed at 8 a.m. to drop off two World Food Program maintenance workers at Caconda. They flew on to Chipindo with other passengers, and returned to Caconda to pick up the maintenance workers.

Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004 Most of the Canadian staff spent the day writing letters to family, friends and supporters. Doreen Toews balanced MAF Angola's financial accounts for July and began working on the August accounts.

Thursday, Sept. 9, 2004 Gary, who serves as MAF Angola program manager, worked on a form required by the Angolan government. Fred studied for the ground school re-currency he needs to fly in Angola. Fred and his wife Kimberley are serving three months in Angola to give the others time to take their vacations. Pilot



Brent Mudde, back from a six-day trekking holiday in southern Angola, helped fix two computers and a washing machine before the day was out.

Friday, Sept. 10, 2004 Gary worked on reports for the upcoming MAF Canada board of directors meeting in Guelph, Ontario, and then prepared a ground school exam for Fred. Brent traveled to Rio de Huila, a village south of Lubango, to help Dr. Karen Hendricks with plumbing work in her home.

Saturday, Sept. 11, 2004 Brent returned to Rio de Huila with a German missionary from the Lubango theological seminary to install a hot water heater for Dr. Hendricks.

Sunday, Sept. 12, 2004 MAF staff attended church services in Lubango, and then Brent, Gary and Fred headed off for a hike and swim at Tchivinguiro Falls. Later, at the Toews home, SIM missionary Sheila Fabiano led a study on Daniel 9.

Monday, Sept. 13, 2004 Base engineer Lonnie Wasik, a pilot/engineer, was back at work after suffering with malaria for two weeks. Gary attended an airport security meeting. Doreen worked on finalizing the August books and gathering information to help MAF Canada raise funds for emergency food deliveries to needy families at Chipindo and Caconda. Brent and Fred departed with one passenger to Menongue, where they took on three more passengers for Mavinga. Flowers were brought on board for a Norwegian Refugee Committee doctor whose husband had them sent out to brighten her day. At Mavinga, seven passengers and a live chicken were welcomed aboard. Returning to Menongue, three passengers were dropped off and a pastor boarded for the return flight to Lubango.

Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2004 Brent and Fred provided flights to Caconda and Chipindo, while Gary spent the day at the MAF office. Later, Brent, Lonnie and Fred worked on the MAF generator, which had a broken contact on its oil pressure sender. A temporary solution allowed it to run for the evening.

Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2004 Brent found a new sender for the generator at an auto repair shop in Lubango, and returned to install it. Lonnie researched service bulletins and airworthiness directives for the Caravan's flap bell cranks. Gary finished Fred's training records and prepared an agenda for the evening staff meeting. In the afternoon, Chris Wasik typed up minutes from the previous staff meeting. Mornings are always busy for Chris because she homeschools her three children.

Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004 Gary and Doreen worked through four years of statements on airport authority fees. (MAF used to be exempt from these fees. Pray with us that Angolan authorities will continue to honour the exemption letter MAF was given in 1997!) Lonnie went



Living in Angola ... Life here has many challenges, as the Wasiks of Calgary well know, having suffered through malaria this year. At present, the Wasiks are the only MAF family with children in Angola. Lonnie is base engineer at Lubango. Chris homeschools the children, Cassandra (Grade 4), Aaron (Grade 2) and Brayton (Kindergarten).

into Lubango to track down information on engine parts sent to Canada. Brent began upgrading the wiring in the Fabiano house. Fred and Kimberley Heier worked on visa applications for their upcoming MAF assignment in Australia.

Friday, Sept. 17, 2004 Gary arranged flights for an Angolan church to Cangamba and for the ZOA relief agency to Chipindo. Doreen finished an appeal letter for supporters regarding the food crisis and met with ZOA staff to discuss the purchase of food for distribution. Lonnie stayed home to take care of his family as his wife Chris had fallen ill with malaria and their son Aaron had a recurring bout. Doreen and Kimberley helped the Wasiks out with meals. Brent finished rewiring the Fabiano house.

Saturday, Sept. 18, 2004 Brent worked on rewiring the Toews house for 110-volt power in several outlets.

The above account was compiled from reports written by Chris Wasik.

Background Photo ... The scene on arrival as the MAF plane lands at Chicomba airstrip in Angola. (Photo taken August 2004 by Steve McGee of SIM)



May we introduce...

The Marples family

Richard and Jennifer Marples, featured in our *Life Link* cover story, have been serving the Lord through MAF in Papua New Guinea since 1999. They live with their children, Samantha, Matthew and Nathaniel, in the town of Vanimo, about 30 km from the Indonesian border.

The Marples family ... Richard and Jennifer with Samantha, Nathaniel and Matthew

Richard is a Twin Otter captain who also preaches regularly in their local church in Vanimo and helps lead worship at MAF's Family Conferences in Mount Hagen, PNG. Jennifer homeschools the children and also leads Sunday School in the local church.

For as long as he can remember, Richard has wanted to be a pilot. Born in England, he accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour at a children's summer camp during the year his family lived in Ottawa. In 1978, the family moved to Trenton, Ontario. It was in 1982 that Richard first felt called to become a missionary pilot.

Richard attended Bethany Bible College in Sussex, New Brunswick, and then completed his flight training at Trinity Western University in British Columbia.

Thereafter, he worked as a flight instructor for seven years, first in Kingston, Ontario, and then in Deseronto, Ontario.

Jennifer was raised in Saint John, New Brunswick, and accepted the Lord at the age of seven. She studied music and Christian education at Bethany Bible College, where she met Richard. In 1987, she participated in a short term missions trip to Australia; an experience that ignited her interest in serving the Lord overseas.

Jennifer and Richard were married in 1989. Samantha was born in 1994, Matthew in 1996 and Nathaniel in 1998.

If you are not currently supporting MAF on a regular basis, and are considering how you can get involved, please consider supporting the Marples family or any other MAF missionary mentioned in this or any other issue of Life Link. To begin your support, simply indicate your intention on the response card enclosed with your Life Link.

Your gifts, combined with those of other ministry partners, help us to provide our missionaries with such needs as housing, medical care and children's schooling. Even a monthly gift of \$20 or \$25 can go a long way toward providing for these needs.

Food crisis in Angola

Canadian MAF supporters send help

CHIPINDO, Angola – After their crops failed in April of this year, families at Chipindo got so hungry they began eating the seeds they intended to save for their next planting season.

Relief workers told of finding one little girl, nine-year-old Marta, lying under a tree, barely able to move. Her hand clutched a few leaves and roots she had foraged from the earth. She was near starvation.

"We must help! These people have weeks, not months," missionary Doreen Toews messaged the MAF office in Guelph, Ontario.

Doreen and the rest of the MAF staff in Angola heard of the desperate situation from ZOA Refugee Care, the Netherlands-based Christian group that has been overseeing an agricultural project at Chipindo to help the people become self-sufficient.

ZOA reported that 22,400 families were at risk as the result of a poor harvest. With not enough rain at first, and then too much rain, their April maize (corn) harvest had come in at less than 100 kg per hectare, far short of a normal year's 700 kg per hectare.

After depleting their maize, and then the partially-grown sweet potatoes in their gardens, the people were now foraging for roots and leaves. Aid workers spotted hair diseases on children, a sure sign of hunger and lack of protein and vitamins.

In response to the crisis, Canadian MAF supporters sent in almost \$40,000 during October for emergency food relief so that families at Chipindo and nearby Caconda could survive until their next harvest, expected in late December or early January.

Doreen herself took on the job of co-ordinating MAF's assistance through ZOA. Doreen is from Port Rowan, Ontario. She and her husband, pilot/engineer Gary Toews, MAF Angola's program manager, have served with MAF in Africa and Canada for 21 years.



Marta ... Help arrived in time for this nine-year-old girl who was near starvation earlier this year.



Of small coins and big lives

Jesus watched the people as they put money into the treasury. Many who were rich gave much, but a poor widow gave only two small coins. "This widow has given more than all the others," Jesus said, "for they gave of their abundance, but she gave everything she had." (Mark 12:41-44)

The story is told of a man who heard a sermon preached on this text one Sunday. Hoping to have a bit of fun with the pastor following the service, the man sought him out and boldly told him, "From now on pastor, I'm going to give the same as the widow!" Unfazed, the pastor responded cheerfully, "I'm glad to hear you're planning to give all that you have."

A few weeks ago, I was reminded of this story when I received a *Life Link* response card in the mail from one of our supporters. A single Canadian loonie was carefully taped on the card next to this handwritten note: "I know it's not much, but it's all I have to sow. God bless you." A humbling gesture to be sure, especially when I consider how quickly we Canadians can overlook the modest and seemingly insignificant in favour of the grand and impressive.

This supporter's gift is one that we received with all thankfulness, as much as any other gift from the thousands of Canadians who support MAF. How good it is to know that God looks on the inside, to the intent, beyond the outward and to the heart.

As we come to the end of another year, I would like to express my thankfulness to each one of you who give to the ministry of MAF. And I also want to thank our missionary pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers and teachers – all of our ministry staff along with their families – who give God the gift of their lives as they serve with MAF on the frontlines of human suffering.

In our staff devotions today, we took time to remember the four young Canadian pilots who paid the ultimate price during their MAF service: Gord Kornelson who died in 1990 in Tanzania, Gary Willems who died in 1987 in Indonesia, George Penner who died in 1982 in Guatemala and Menno Voth who died in 1968 in Indonesia. In prayer, we also remembered their wives and children, who had to continue their lives without them.

We remembered that God gave his only begotten Son so that you and I could live out lives that glorify Him on this earth and soon join Him in heaven.

May your Christmas be a blessed one!

Together with you, in His service,

Ron Epp
President/Chief Executive
Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada



In His service ... Ron Epp, wearing the brimmed hat, joins MAF staff in PNG for this 2003 photo.

Notes from supporters

"You are doing a wonderful job for the Lord. May God be with you and bless. Happy to hear how things are going!"

L.G., North York, Ontario

"I will always be grateful for your generous and efficient services to us when we were missionaries in the Congo. Our lifeline! I know you continue to be that to missionaries and natives alike. God bless!"

S.E., Debert, Nova Scotia

"I praise the Lord for the wonderful work you do! And I pray for your safety."

V.B., Salmon Arm, British Columbia

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We exist to demonstrate God's love through aviation, communications and logistics to meet spiritual and physical needs. Our vision is that all people have access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the resources to meet their needs.

MAF Canada is a charter subscriber to the Canadian Council of Christian Charities' seal of financial accountability.