



At the end of World War 2,
Christian pilots started
MAF to assist needy
people in the world's
most isolated areas.

Today, MAF Canada and
other MAFs co-operate as
a global partnership
serving 30 nations with
138 light aircraft.

Tsunami relief in Indonesia

MEULABOH, Indonesia – News of the Indian Ocean tsunami on December 26 reached quickly across the world, but it took time before the scope of the tragedy could truly be understood. A 9.0 undersea earthquake had produced the most devastating tsunami in modern history, claiming lives in 11 countries. More than 200,000 people had perished, most of them on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

Sharing airspace with media and military helicopters, MAF aircraft were soon flying all daylight hours to bring food and relief workers to Indonesian communities hardest hit by the disaster.

“We saw incredible damage... I can't imagine the wall of water that caused that much damage,” Canadian pilot Rick Willms reported after his first flight over Meulaboh, the coastal town closest to the earthquake epicentre. Here 30,000 people died when waves 10 metres high crashed inland.

continued inside...



Help arrives ... Young survivors of the December 26 tsunami happily greet relief workers arriving at Sumatra Island. (MAF Staff Photo)



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“And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” Isaiah 58:10



Meulaboh coastline ... Relief supplies arrive at Meulaboh aboard a U.S. Navy hovercraft. (USN Photo by Bart A. Bauer)

Tsunami relief in Indonesia ...continued from front page

After confirming avgas supplies on Sumatra, MAF was able to send in a C206 aircraft from its Tarakan base on Kalimantan (Borneo) island. A 14-passenger C208 Grand Caravan was then ferried in from the island of New Guinea, followed by an amphibious Turbo Beaver from Bangladesh and a GA8 Airvan from Australia.

MAF relief flights began in and around Meulaboh and the devastated islands of Nias and Simeulue. Anxious to receive food and medical aid, tsunami survivors in this region helped to clear debris from undamaged sections of the coastal road so these could be used as landing strips for the C206.

While the Beaver served coastal inlets and river communities, the Caravan shuttled relief supplies and staff between Meulaboh and the main supply depots at Medan.

MAF's relief team included pilots and aircraft mechanics, a load master, information technologists and staff members overseeing logistics. The first relief supplies delivered by MAF – rice, sugar, canned fish, cooking oil, water purification tablets, and tool kits for rebuilding houses – came from the Red Cross, the U.S. Navy, Samaritan's Purse, and Operation Blessing/Obor Berkat Indonesia.

Because all MAF pilots based in Indonesia can speak

Indonesian, they were able to understand as survivors told of not having eaten for days, and of family and friends still suffering from unattended injuries such as broken bones.

When a pilot noted in one of the villages that there were no children to be seen, a local man answered, "Habis Pak." ("They're all gone, sir.") Children were among those who had scampered across the sand to gather up fish when the tide suddenly withdrew on that fateful day. They were easily swept away by the incoming tsunami.

As Rick observed, "There is a lot of long-term reconstruction that needs to happen, not only physically, but emotionally, spiritually, mentally. Pray that God's love would shine through to the people of Sumatra."

MAF has provided flights in Indonesia since 1954, but never before in troubled Aceh province on Sumatra because MAF flights can only happen in places where MAF has been invited to help.

Immediately after the tsunami, the Indonesian Air Force invited MAF to help with its relief effort in Aceh although the province was previously closed to foreigners while the military tried to crush a 30-year-old separatist movement. Even as international aid workers cared for tsunami survivors, tensions between the military and the separatists continued.

Aceh has a long history of unrest. For three decades, Christian churches here have been burned down – and in 2002, Aceh became the first Indonesian province to adopt shari'a law, sanctioning imprisonment or caning for anyone who propagates beliefs other than Islam to Muslims.

Farther east in Indonesia, MAF has a total of 20 aircraft at 11 flight bases. Staff members not involved in the tsunami relief faced an extra workload as they continued to meet MAF's normal flight obligations.

In addition to Rick and Amy Willms with their daughter Rachel, the Canadian MAF missionaries living in Indonesia at present are pilot Clarence Togerez with his wife Jeanette and their three children, pilot Chris Uganecz with his wife Julene and their two children, and school teachers Johanna Wielenga and Harry Wiebe.

Pilot Remi Van Wermeskerken and his wife Tjandra with their three children were on furlough in Canada when the tsunami struck, but Remi returned to Indonesia in January to help out Helimission, an MAF partner organization also working in Aceh.

This was the third time in a year that MAF has been involved in earthquake relief in Indonesia. In February 2004, when several earthquakes shook northern parts of Papua province, Clarence, Jeanette and Johanna provided help. Only months later, the same area was hit by another large earthquake that claimed 40 lives.

MAF flights serve the Indonesian churches and such groups as the Australian Baptist Missionary Society, Asia Pacific Christian Mission, Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Evangelical Alliance Mission, the Lutheran Church, the Netherlands Reformed Church, Unevangelized Fields Mission, World Team, World Vision, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Zending Gereformeerde Kerken.

"What those nations need more than money right now is helicopters and C-130s (Hercules aircraft) and small fixed-wing airplanes that can get out to the remote areas."

Comment by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in a Jan. 2, 2005 interview on CNN. By the time he said this, the first MAF aircraft had already flown to the disaster area.



Survey ... This view from a Seahawk helicopter shows the tsunami damage at Meulaboh. (USN Photo by Jordon R. Beesley)



Security ... A soldier from Singapore provides security in Meulaboh. (USN Photo by Bart A. Bauer)



Clean Water ... Children in Meulaboh cart away bottled water. (USN Photo by Alan D. Monyelle)

How God cleared the way for tsunami relief

Pilot Stan Unruh as he ferried the C206 to the disaster area from Tarakan –

“I’m in the most bizarre or surreal situation that I can ever remember... On the flight to Aceh, the weather in and around Singapore was not too good but every time Air Traffic Control cleared us to a new altitude or heading, it always took us to better weather or clearer areas. Very cool to see the Lord work on our behalf!”

Pilot Chris Uganecz, due to serve in Tarakan soon, on how God ensured clean water for our pilots –

“Yesterday, Stan Unruh called us from Tarakan on our cell phone with a request to take our family’s personal water filter system along to Aceh in the C206... We’d had it shipped directly to Tarakan from Canada so that we will have it once we arrive there. It’s now being put to use in a very practical way!”

Pilot Rick Willms on miracles received and prayers still needed –

“At one village, when the people felt the earthquake, they ran to higher ground and escaped the tsunami destruction... They gave us green coconuts as an expression of thanks for what we were doing. They gave back out of the little they had!”

“Arriving over Meulaboh, the water buffalo were wandering across the runway or standing right beside it. Definitely not safe to land. We circled for 20 minutes and then someone came out to chase them away...”

“Please pray for continued safety and protection. The C206 is landing on sections of what used to be the coastal road, only about five metres wide... The Turbo Beaver is often landing on rivers that have a lot of debris in them... Our pilots and crew at Meulaboh are sleeping in tents, living in primitive conditions without running water... Mosquitoes have become a big problem. The guys are all in great spirits, however, and thankful to be able to help a little.”



MAF CRISIS RESPONSE



Amphibian Beaver ... Equipped with floats and wheels, this MAF aircraft has been helping coastal inlets and river communities. Below are scenes of the tsunami destruction in Aceh province, Indonesia. (MAF Staff Photos)



May we introduce... The Willmses

Rick and Amy Willms have been serving the Lord through MAF in Indonesia for 22 years. They raised four daughters on the mission field: Carey, Lisa, Julie, and Rachel. Carey and Lisa now are both married – Carey lives in Saskatchewan, Lisa in Colorado. Julie is also in Saskatchewan, studying physical therapy at university. Only Rachel, in her final year of high school, still lives with her parents in Indonesia.



Amy and Rick Willms ...
in Papua, Indonesia

Rick, featured in our *Life Link* cover story, has served as chief pilot for the MAF flight program in the province of Papua (formerly Irian Jaya) since 1994. He oversees training and standardization of MAF pilots, as well as the opening and upgrading of landing strips. Directly or indirectly, he has been involved in opening up about 40 airstrips in the past 10 years.

Amy has assisted in several areas of ministry, including outreach to Papuan children, teaching, running a guesthouse, and MAF accounting and flight following. In recent years, her involvement has been curtailed due to health issues.

Rick was raised in Abbotsford, BC, and was a child when he accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour. At the age of 12, through the testimony of MAF pilot Menno Voth, he felt he could combine his love of airplanes and his call to missions. (Menno at that time was just leaving as a pilot for Irian Jaya, and tragically died in an accident only six months later.)

Amy was raised in Hague, SK, and Dawson Creek, BC. She grew up in a Christian home and made a definite decision to follow Jesus in her mid-teens. By her early 20's, she felt the Lord directing her into missions. Amy met Rick in Dawson Creek during her last year of high school. He was working there, earning money to buy an airplane to build hours. They both then attended Briercrest Bible Institute in Caronport, SK, and were married in 1976.

Rick obtained his private and commercial pilot's licences in Abbotsford, and his maintenance licence at the British Columbia Institute of Technology in Burnaby. Early flying jobs were with Wilderness Airlines at Williams Lake and Athabaska Airways at Isle à La Crosse and LaRonge, SK.

Since joining MAF, Rick has reached a total of more than 16,500 flight hours.

If you are not currently supporting MAF on a regular basis, and are considering how you can get involved, please consider supporting the Willms 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.

What our pilots saw...

From Stan Unruh in the C206 –

“Flying toward Meulaboh, we started to see whole villages wiped out by the flood... We were speechless at the destruction and obvious toll on human life...”

From Doug Allrich in the C208 Grand Caravan –

“Yesterday, it was pouring rain and there was a man sitting on what remained of his house, just the foundation. He was holding up a piece of linoleum to keep the rain from hitting him directly. When asked about his family, he said that his wife was killed and all of his kids were missing.”

From Rick Willms in the Amphibian Beaver –

“We landed on a river and unloaded boxes of food... We then continued north and picked up some aid workers at the side of the river where a town used to be. We saw the shell of a three-storey dormitory at what used to be a girls' school, where 150 girls lost their lives... Where the coastline is flat, the tsunami went in several kilometres...”



View from helicopter ...

In early January, a U.S. Navy photographer spotted MAF's C206 on a road near Meulaboh.



Keeping on ... Amid the chaos in Meulaboh, a woman with her child nearby washes dishes and provides for her family.

Taking a year out...



Paul Stover ... and the King Air 200.

Most MAF pilots spend from four to 40 years living at overseas bases where they provide flights for Christian missions, local churches and development projects. Occasionally, however, one of MAF's international partners will ask for short-term help in a crisis region.

Paul Stover, now based in Calgary, took a leave of absence from Air Canada to provide humanitarian flights in one of the world's most devastated areas. For security reasons, we do not name the country, the partner organization, or any of Paul's co-workers.

CALGARY, Alberta – For one year, airline pilot Paul Stover had the opportunity to step out of the culture of billion-dollar airports and large passenger jets into the little-known world of dusty mountain airstrips and light aircraft serving in a war-torn region of Central Asia.

Not far from the place he called home, local militia still vied for

power and relief workers were murdered by those who saw them as political instruments of the West. What a place to live out God's calling on your life... to provide help when some of the most dangerous and vocal people around you do not want it.

But the people Paul met did want help. The flights he provided with a 10-passenger Beech King Air 200 allowed medical and relief workers to attend to the needs of ordinary people who genuinely appreciated the care they received. Before he returned to Canada last December, Paul wrote this to friends:

"As I ponder the bigger picture that I have played a small part in, I really can see the positive changes taking place... I can walk around my neighbourhood and see houses being rebuilt, girls going to school, functioning clinics giving affordable medical care.

"I came to help get people (relief workers) from point A to point B safely so that they could do this work that is so badly needed... and I have had my eyes opened a little wider to the realities of this world and my responsibility to do my part."

Paul will always remember the scene he encountered when he visited one remote mountain airstrip, newly constructed to bring medical supplies and services to a northeastern corner of the country.

"There were four medical workers living up there running a very busy, but tiny clinic. Around the clinic, families of tuberculosis patients camped out while their loved ones received daily treatment over the course of several weeks. These families came from all over the province."

This airstrip had been built by hand (many hands!) and only crude machinery. To compact the earth enough to support an aircraft, the local people filled fuel drums with dirt and rolled them across the 550 metres of runway. "At this strip, the aircraft can only land uphill and take off downhill due to the slope of up to 15 percent and the fact that the strip faces a huge mountain."

A highlight of Paul's term of service was his visit to an orphanage where new friends of his worked. "The children looked healthy and happy. They received three decent meals each day," he notes.

Difficult moments included witnessing the despair and devastation caused by one of the five earthquakes that hit the region during his time there. Paul was quickly re-directed to nearby Iran where he provided flights for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), involved in assessing the needs of earthquake survivors. More than 40,000 people died in the ancient city of Bam when the 6.6 quake struck on Dec. 26, 2003.*

Paul Stover was born and raised in London, ON. After aviation training at Trinity Western University, he gained three years of bush flying experience in northern Manitoba, then worked 5-1/2 years for Air Canada out of Vancouver, flying Boeing 767 aircraft around the world and Boeing 737-200s across Canada. Now based in Calgary, he has returned to flying 767 overseas routes for Air Canada.

**Note this earthquake occurred exactly one year before the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami on Dec. 26, 2004.*

The past and the future ... "The face on the old man seems to tell a lot, as does the sight of a girl peeking out of the doorway," notes Paul Stover, who took this photo while hiking along a ridge.



His example

The year 2005 opened up for us on a different note, to say the least. The day after Christmas, many of us were watching as the tsunami tragedy in Asia unfolded. Our hearts sank as we saw people being overcome by a wall of water and all the devastation that followed. The power of a tsunami is estimated as the equivalent of detonating a million atomic bombs. Nature in God's hands still outperforms anything Man can build.

We can find ourselves wondering: why does God allow this devastation? After all, as the first chapter of Genesis says, God created the world and everything in it and it was good. Not much further into Genesis, however, we read about the creation of man, and by the third chapter, the fall of man. As verses 14 to 19 read, with the fall came a curse on the ground. The New Testament also talks about this. Romans 10:19-22 says the earth "groans."

Does this mean that we should do nothing when disaster strikes?

Matthew 9:36 tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them. And His compassion motivated Him to action. At MAF we try to follow Christ's example by demonstrating compassion and faithfully serving as we can.

In the first chapter of Second Corinthians, the Apostle Paul talks about being delivered from a deadly peril, but also about comforting those who are troubled. Many people died in the December 26 tsunami but many were also spared. At MAF, we feel privileged to be part of the relief effort providing comfort and hope to those who have survived.

Looking at the larger picture, we also need to remember the many places and the many needy people who are not currently receiving media attention. As hard as we are working now to assist in Indonesia, we must also be faithful to keep our commitments of bringing hope to those who are suffering in other regions of the world.

Wherever MAF is at work, we want to be seen as people who represent Jesus Christ by bringing His love and compassion. May God bless you as you join with us in this endeavour.

Together with you in His service,

Ron Epp
President/Chief Executive Officer
Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada



You're invited to an MAF benefit concert!

Tapestry ... The musical group *Tapestry* with special guest Tom Ward will perform on Saturday, June 4, at 7 p.m. at Lakeside Church in Guelph, ON. Freewill gifts will be directed to Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada's Angola aircraft fund. Shown in front row, left to right, are Julie Kennedy, Lee-Ann Kaczorowski and accompanist Nancy Kaczorowski. In the back are Steve Hildebrandt and Tom Ward.

To reserve seating, please contact MAF at info@mafc.org or phone the Guelph office at 1-519-821-3914 (or toll-free 1-877-351-9344).

Notes from supporters

"May you find blessing as you bring help to those in distress."

G.H., Canmore, Alberta

"May God bless you all in this important link in missions around the world."

M.W., Caledonia, Ontario

"I do enjoy the informative news that you send out quarterly through *Life Link* ... May the Lord continue to bless your ministry."

E.C., Delta, 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.

5 year-old child

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