



A Week in the Life of MAF

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CHRISTIAN FOCUS





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8 ✈ A Week in the Life of MAF

else besides. Without his gracious assistance this book would be a pale shadow of itself.

And I wish to thank Keith Jones, MAF CEO UK. Keith, a friend for over three decades, opened the door for the book to be written. My interest in Mission Aviation Fellowship stems from our friendship.

Irene Howat

2006





Foreword

For more than fifty years I have been closely linked with MAF and its story.

It began for me in January 1956 when, aged eight years, I listened avidly with my parents to the daily BBC radio reports of five young American missionaries who had gone missing in the Ecuadorean jungle while trying to contact an unreached tribe of Indians. After five days their bodies were discovered; killed by those they had gone to help. It made a huge impression upon me as I thought of the sacrifice these men had made to share the love of Jesus with people who had never heard.





10 ✈ A Week in the Life of MAF

It continued for me as a fourteen year old, when I read the biography of Nate Saint, one of those same five missionaries, and realised that he been a pilot with an organisation called Mission Aviation Fellowship, and had flown the other four men on their fateful mission. God spoke to me through Nate's life and clearly challenged me to also become a missionary pilot.

In 1971 my wife Susan and I joined MAF. Over the next 13 years we worked in Ethiopia and Kenya, where I flew as a pilot. Since 1984, I have fulfilled a number of management and leadership roles and have been privileged to visit more than 30 countries for MAF. I have seen firsthand the myriad ways that MAF is serving and have also witnessed the significant changes which have affected every aspect of the work.

When MAF began flying in the 1940s and 1950s it was mainly to support western missionaries in their role of "speeding the gospel to the ends of the earth". By the time we went as a family to Africa in early 1972, the church was already growing exponentially as a result of those pioneer efforts. Today we see that a major shift has taken place so that national church leaders, pastors and evangelists are increasingly the ones using the aircraft to visit their congregations and to open up remote and inaccessible areas. MAF staff are also changing as more nationals join as technicians, managers, administrators etc. This is exciting and rightly reflects how God has been building His church in today's environment.

Today MAF also works in many places where it has been able to bring relief and help in disaster and long-term development situations. Often these tragic situations bring opportunities to be witnesses to God's love especially in countries where Christianity is a minority faith.





Foreword ✈ 11

Looking ahead, we see that the era of missionary aviation is far from over and that it is not exclusively a ministry in the tribal areas of the world. We will need to remain flexible and focused on our task if we are to adapt to a world that is increasingly wracked by political turmoil, economic upheaval, natural and man-made catastrophes and yet, sometimes paradoxically, often offers greater freedom to God's people to demonstrate and share His love and the good news of the gospel.

As a Christian aviation organisation, MAF has always had a glamorous and exciting image that frequently does not reflect the sheer difficulty and tedium of the task – running an exceedingly complicated, highly-regulated, technical organisation while operating in some of the harshest and most remote locations of the world. I have therefore been thrilled to be part of Irene Howat's vision to share the routine, the complexity, the hardship and yet the great joy of operating such a vital support ministry.

Irene's idea to produce a diary which would give a modern snapshot of MAF activities around the world is very timely. We have many supporters who have grown up, as I did, on the stories of Nate Saint and other pioneers. This has been right and proper. But it is also important to acknowledge that this is no longer the norm. The original vision and purpose of MAF in 1945 is very little changed today but technology, the political environment, the people we serve and so many other aspects of MAF's work are significantly different.

Irene's book will give you a wider understanding of what MAF is doing in today's world. It will help you to see the changing face of many of our programs. You will be challenged by the incredible commitment of MAF staff working in difficult situations but also amazed at their





12 ✈ A Week in the Life of MAF

cheerfulness as they happily live and serve in remote and trying locations without the benefits of everyday life that most of us take for granted.

After 34 years working with MAF you would think that I know everything about MAF and its people but the diary week has given me a new insight into MAF's ministry. I have been challenged about my own commitment in serving God as I have read through the contributions from around the world and pray that you will be too.

Max Gove

Manager of Research and Development
MAF Europe





AT THE HEART OF THE MISSION

For over half a century Mission Aviation Fellowship has facilitated the work of Christian mission and supported Christians in remote areas, that being what it set out to do. But the world changes with the passage of time. When MAF was founded much that we take for granted today had not been invented. There were no satellite Global Positioning Systems, and none of the hi-tech instruments that today's pilots and passengers take for granted. Nor was communication easy. The Internet was unborn, e-mails were in the far distant future, and news spread in an altogether slower fashion. While it can be uncomfortable running to keep

13





14 ✈ A Week in the Life of MAF

up with the world, Mission Aviation Fellowship has done just that. And there are many remote and isolated places where MAF has been the agent of change, the means by which technology and instant communication have become available. Today MAF is involved in a whole list of activities and services. But should anyone worry that the Mission's initial reason for being has been lost in the mists of history, this book will reassure that the work has extended rather than diverted. Mission and the support of local Christians is still at the heart of MAF, and MAF is certainly right at the heart of mission, and much else besides.

A Mission Aviation Fellowship aircraft takes off or lands somewhere in the world on average every three minutes, day and night, week in and week out, throughout the year. In order to give a snapshot of the Mission's ministry, members of staff were invited to keep diaries of their activities for a week in September 2004, and what follows is a digest of their diaries. The diaries came in a wide variety of forms, and they have been altered as little as possible in order that they reflect the personalities of the writers. Many names occur in the text and, as a rule, only MAF missionaries are given their surnames; Christian names are used for others, although there are exceptions where MAF's national employees contributed their own diaries.

But where to begin? Dimitry Mustafin, a member of the Moscow Camp of Gideons International, says that it gives him great pleasure to think that, because of the vast distance between the western and eastern borders of Russia, Bible distribution is a twenty-four-hour-a-day activity. When he and his friends in Moscow pack up for the night, their fellow Gideons are beginning their distribution work in far off Vladivostok. It is even more so with Mission Aviation Fellowship. Russia stretches halfway round the world, but





At the Heart of Mission ✈ 15

MAF, working in thirty-nine poor and remote countries, operates right round the globe. Not all MAF programmes were able to provide diaries of their activities during the week. Had they done, the amount of material would have been quite unmanageable!

The sun's first rays of each new day shine down on the Chatham Islands to the east of New Zealand. It is very shortly afterwards that the day the Lord has made, and in which we rejoice and are glad, dawns on Australia. MAF Australia is one of the Mission's four main operations: MAF Australia, MAF Canada, MAF Europe and MAF US. A number of national MAFs function within their own countries. Each of these four has its geographical area of work that reflects its history and development. MAF Australia works in Arnhem Land (an Aboriginal Northern Australia in the north-east of the Northern Territory) Papua New Guinea and Cambodia. It has also carried out temporary relief work in Aceh in Sumatra, Indonesia. MAF Canada's activities are carried out in Angola. MAF Europe has work in Africa, Bangladesh and Mongolia, and the focus of MAF USA's activities is in South and Central America, South East and Central Asia and Africa.

