

May 2021

M&M

FLIGHTRECORDER



Newsletter from Mathias & Mandy Glass

Nro 54



DEAR FRIENDS,

“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.” Psalm 91:1

On May 7, 1951, the first MAF-PNG flight took off from Madang, with Harry Hartwig at the controls. Only three months later, he had an accident. The loss of the first pilot and plane after just three months of operation was a huge blow for MAF in Papua New Guinea.

Today, MAF is the longest-serving aviation operator in PNG and operates a fleet of 9 soon to be 10 Cessna 208 Caravans. Over those 70 years our fleet has changed, but MAF’s vision has remained the same: sharing Christ’s love to isolated people through aviation.

This 70th anniversary means a lot of extra work for Mandy; good timing that she finally got a colleague! We can’t hold big celebrations because of the Covid restrictions; therefore, a lot is done using the media: newspaper

articles, website updates, social media, new MAF PNG flyers, even a stamp series and a children’s book in English and Tok Pisin are all in the works. .

HERE you can watch the MAF PNG anniversary video.

Among some checking flights, calls to fly medevacs and other various office tasks, Mathias is working through the safety recommendations of the accident investigations from our two landing accidents in 2020. Not only we in PNG, but also MAF International is going through a period of change and adaptation to new security standards.

We have many reasons to be grateful despite some difficulties. God is faithful and he helps us through, back in 1951 and also today. Not only here in PNG, but wherever you are walking and living life with him.

We are also grateful for you, who walk with us so faithfully in our service and everyday life; despite the great distance you are close to us through your greetings, prayers and donations!
Lukim yu, Mandy & Mathias



BEAUTY AND PAIN, HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT — FOUND IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AND FOUND IN GOD

More than just a story of a medical evacuation flight

The Beauty

I never get tired of the beauty of Papua New Guinea. As I lean out the aircraft window: the landscape down below gleaming and shimmering in all shades of green like crinkled velvet, divided by lines of muddy and clear waterways, and the intense blue sky filled with big and small fluffy puffs of clouds!

However, when the clouds fill the valleys and touch the tree-tops, flying gets challenging. Will we be able to find a way through this maze of clouds and safely land at the airstrip? But also will we be able to get out again to fly this woman to hospital?

The Pain

Saturday morning, the two of us were in town for a shopping trip. The call came as we entered the hardware store. Medevac! Domestic violence. The local Community Health Worker (CHW) wasn't able to stop the bleeding and the district hospital approved and called for a medevac.

30 minutes later we were at the airport. Mathias started the preparation for the flight, checking the aircraft. Nawi Mabo, one of our ground support staff, helped with the paperwork, was to monitor the flight and would marshal us back to the parking position later in the day. We took the stretcher, just in case.



As we left Mt Hagen crossing various ridges, the clouds turned from white to grey, narrowing our sight, and giving us some rain showers as we were progressing to turn off from the main valley into the small valley of our destination. It didn't look very good at all as there were scattered clouds everywhere – but enough space to continue into the valley. There was a woman in need, waiting for us to fly her to hospital. We can't just turn around. "I can see the edge of the airstrip," said Mathias. But this was from high up, through a layer of clouds. Not the right position to attempt a landing.

"We have enough fuel to fly a waiting pattern and see how the clouds might move," – to open up a way for us, for the woman. So we return to a more open space of the bigger valley and lose altitude. "I will try to get under the clouds, fly along the left of the valley with enough safety margin to turn-around if we can't get any further. If we can get under the clouds, we might have a chance to land, but would need a quick turn-around to not overnight at the village."

The Relief

The community was ready as we landed. They must have heard us overhead, above the clouds. The woman, well, a fairly young girl still, was carried to the airstrip and seated on the aircraft stairs. There was no stretcher for her at the local health post. So two men carried her forming a "chair" with their arms supporting her legs and back. This must have been painful for her, as her wound was right there.



Continues

No tears of pain, no squeezing of eyes, or other facial expressions of pain. To me, her eyes were somehow inward bound, kind of empty, sad.

A small crowd circled the plane, Mathias kneeling on the ground amidst them working on the paperwork for this flight. To get the patient into the aircraft, we had her lay on the stretcher and people lifted her into the aircraft through the wide-open cargo door, which was much easier, instead of having her hoisted into the plane dragging and pushing her through the small cabin door. She could sit on the back-row seat next to her caregiver, probably her mum or another relative. That way, she was better secured with the seat belt as the stretcher safety belt would have needed to be tightened right over her wound.



The clouds stayed a safe distance away from the edge of the runway giving a view to velvet green hills on the other side of the valley. Everything was set for take-off. Thank you, Lord!

The flight to Kompiam took us over a few ridges and as we got closer to Kompiam, the gaps between the clouds and the ridges became wider and wider. Kompiam valley was wide open. Clear to land!

Within 5 minutes after landing, the MAF agent, who was busy working on the new church building halfway down the side of the airstrip, and the hospital's ambulance arrived at the airstrip. The aircraft stretcher came again into action to transfer the patient into the ambulance – and off they drove. The clinic staff was waiting to see her



The Contemplation

I was contemplating the events of the day and what I have observed over the years. Often, I hardly see any women in the crowds surrounding the aircraft with open eyes, who look happy and content. Their faces are often hard and with very little facial expression. Is this a mirror of their life in general? I guess as their life is tough with looking after the garden, which often is a long walk away, making sure there's food on the plates, looking after the children, doing what they've been told by their husbands, and possibly even being sexually abused as well. They just bear the pain silently, even when obviously wounded...

I can't imagine life in the village with all its hardships, but I do adore these women. They are strong, inside out. They are caring for their children and bear the pain, the suffering. Surely they enjoy moments of laughter, comfort and happiness, but maybe more privately and when they know they are in a safe place, alone somewhere, or maybe with a friend or two, or when singing and worshipping God in church or privately.

The Help and the Risk

Dr Rebecca Williams, Medical Superintendent at the [Kompiam District Hospital](#) run by Enga Baptist Health Services, wrote: "Thank you to MAF and Mathias for bringing her in; we really appreciate all the work you guys do to support our services out here.

Continues

"I received the call requesting the medevac on Saturday morning from one of our staff here in Kompiam who was on the VHF radio with the health worker from the village. As is often the case, it is difficult to assess the severity of illness or injury, but from what I gathered there was a young lady who had been chopped. The wound was significant and the staff was worried about the bleeding.

"Once she had arrived at the hospital, whilst her wound was large, there was no active bleeding. However, she will need repair of the wound in theatre as the cut was about 10cm by 5cm extending in a posterior-lateral direction mid-thigh and almost down to the femur bone. Fortunately, there were no nerve injuries.

"I suppose the major risk for her if we didn't bring her in soon would have been infection. In hindsight after assessing her injuries she probably could have waited until there was a regular flight for her to be picked up; however, as I mentioned it can be very difficult to assess the severity of illness or injury over radio or phone, particularly if we have a staff who isn't very experienced out bush. I will often err on the side of caution and ask for a medevac as the alternative to having a patient die out thereafter it has been called in by a health worker can have serious consequences. Better safe than sorry, I guess."



The Background Story

"With regards to the events leading up to her injury, what the patient and her guardian told me is as follows. On Thursday she was out harvesting 'marita' (this is the Pandanus Conoideus plant, it's a red fruit that is widely available throughout the highlands region) with her husband. Her husband asked her to prepare a leaf which they could use to put the fruit on, for some reason there was an argument over that and he chopped her leg, she was brought to the health centre on Thursday and received treatment and dressings there.

"She has been married for about two months now, and prior to this incident, there have been some verbal and physical altercations between her husband and herself. I asked what they as a family would do. They said once she had recovered they would return home and talk with the husband and his relatives, most likely there will be compensation paid by the husband to his wife and that is how they will solve the problem.

The Culture

"I can appreciate that it seems to be such a senseless thing to occur, particularly an argument over something so insignificant, and it must be difficult to comprehend the reasoning that goes into someone behaving like this towards his wife or any other person for that matter. But I suppose we perceive things with the collective knowledge of all that we have learnt in school or from our own cultures or from Christianity; basically from all that we have been exposed to from being in a position of privilege. This exposure allows us to draw from examples and influences, which in turn direct our thoughts and actions. For someone out in the bush, who probably hasn't been educated in a school or hasn't been exposed to a wider community, where would they draw examples from? Primarily their fathers, forefathers, and other men in their community and if violence is the only way in which they have seen conflict resolved then that is what they resort to. The same applies to the women in such communities if they don't know better; then how can they want better for themselves?

A Conclusion – God

"And I suppose the lives of the women in communities like this is tough especially if apart from their daily chores they are being abused. But I wouldn't say they aren't happy or not content. Happiness and contentment aren't constants in anyone's life, and we all face hardships as a result of our actions or the actions of others. But I do think they're only found where God is present and where we allow Him to be present in our lives. This contentment is, I think, the understanding of God's guidance over our lives regardless of us working and living in times and conditions/situations we may not fully understand ourselves."



COVID IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Covid measures affecting our flight operations

According to the current government regulations by the PNG National Control Centre (NCC), every passenger must have a negative 24 hour Covid-19 test, even for a domestic flight. MAF has permission from the NCC to carry out Covid tests for passengers, but this is currently only possible in Mt Hagen and Telefomin. In Mt Hagen, a doctor and a nurse from our MAF team help facilitate these tests; in Telefomin the hospital helps. Given the number of test kits available, we are giving priority to health workers and teachers who have to fly to remote villages for their service. We do have a test exemption permit for medevacs though.

MAF is talking to government officials about how to make air travel possible again for people from the bush and as I am writing this, we just received this exemption. However, certain hygiene, health and administrative measures will have to be maintained and documented for each flight and passenger.

Pilots and survey teams continue to survey the bush airstrips. Occasionally, a team of technicians flies along to install HF radios. More than 110 of the original 210 airstrips are currently open

for our MAF Caravan operation. For about 30 others, the survey data has yet to be evaluated. Some airstrips are remaining closed because they do not meet the standard for safe take off and landing with our C208 Cessna Caravan. As a safety manager and because of his many years of experience as a pilot, it is part of Mathias' tasks to evaluate the airstrip reports and then either to approve or question the conclusion to re-open an airstrip.

Personally, we are well. At MAF's premises and in the shops it is mandatory to wear a mask (the main thing is that it hangs in your face ...). Nationwide there are more than 15,000 confirmed cases, a good 10% of them are employees within the health care system, PNG records approx. 1% deaths of those tested positive.

A vaccination campaign has started. Mathias has already picked up his jab. Mandy is wary of the AstraZeneca, the only one on offer here because she had a bleeding disorder as a teenager.

MAF is talking to authorities to fly vaccination teams; just as we've always logistically enable other vaccination campaigns, e.g., for measles and polio.



Thank God with us

- ▶ for new families at MAF as well as new local employees who join the team. Mandy is finally working in a team, has a colleague for public relations.
- ▶ that some families could finally go on their well-deserved vacation and home assignment and that the break from the mission field provides rest and encouraging encounters, as well as new motivation and strength.
- ▶ for the many health patrols and medevacs that MAF was able to fly despite Covid restrictions.
- ▶ for the good progress with the runway measurements and that more and more villages can be reached again with the MAF plane.

Pray with us

- ▶ that the CASA audit this week (May 24-28) is successful and MAF will again receive a 3-year operating license from the aviation authority.
- ▶ for the management team that currently has a lot of challenges to overcome: Covid restrictions, upcoming relocation and renovation of our base here in Mt Hagen.
- ▶ for the Bible School and work of the Liebenzeller Mission in Aviamap. There are disputes with the neighbourhood about the land, involving physical threats and violence against the local team. Their late dad sold the land to the government 30 years ago for the Bible School to be build and always stated that he gave it to the Lord. Pray for peace, protection, strength and new motivation of the local employees.

STAY CONNECTED

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