

At the farewell party last Tuesday evening, Jim Ferguson, an 80 year old veteran missionary bush pilot recalled to memory some things that I'd like to share with you. In Jim's pre-mission years he was a commercial pilot, crop duster who for many years desired to go into missions. The last flight of 5 years as a crop duster, nearly took his life, as he passed under a high wire, which clipped his vertical and bent his rudder and then on top of that swiped out a swath of cornstalks that he was spraying. At that moment, after a shaky landing back at home base, the Lord gently spoke to him saying, "You know, you almost lost your life doing that, wouldn't you rather give your life to the Lord's Work?"

Jim left behind his beloved passion for flying and his crop dusting business, went straight home and told his wife they were going into New Tribes Mission. He sold their home and drove his family of 5 to Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania where he spent the next year in missionary training being challenged to go overseas to many different places. At the training center, as each missionary would come and share the Lord's work from various countries he would be challenged to go to yet another place!

Near the end of their mission training they were asked by the executive board of the New Tribes Mission to start a flight program for the mission. Tribal Air Communications (TAC) was formed which is today called NTM Aviation. With a passion to fly, Jim was more than willing to accept the assignment.

One of the things Jim said; which stood out to me the most, was when he mentioned prior to New Tribes' flight program, how Lee German, a veteran missionary/pilot, had made his way to the field with only a brand new private pilot's license and taken a Super Cub to the field of the Philippines and had learned the hard way on his own suffering from various mishaps. Lee had carved dozens of airstrips out of mountainous terrain where one couldn't even imagine the possibility of an airstrip. With that experience under his belt, Lee returned from the field with a strong fundamental commitment to train pilots before going to overseas. It was with this in mind; that has motivated (TAC) NTM Aviation to maintain a strong training emphasis using pilots and mechanics who have had invaluable field experience.

Down through the many years as pilots, we have flown a lot of 'precious cargo' (missionaries) who entrust themselves and their children into our hands flying them into remote unapproved airstrips, cut out of jungles, with many different shapes, slopes and lengths.

Over the past 48 years, God has purposefully used Jim and his wife Edna's willing, devoted and tireless service to their Lord in the Philippines and here at NTM Aviation, fired from a passion to make known the good news about God's Son.

In Jim's last letter he put it like this: "I am leaving NTM Aviation. The power is at 30%, the flaps are half down, the gear is down and locked, and I'm cleared to land on the runways of glory together with our Lord!"

Jim was one of Paul Dye's (my dad) flight instructors and mine as well. Now as the time has come for Jim and Edna to leave these surroundings at NTM Aviation, in McNeal, AZ, it has become very meaningful to me how God has used his past flying experience, even as a crop duster and on the field, to pass on this tremendous responsibility to us.

All this to say, while taking into perspective Jim's life, the input and blessing he has been to so many who have gone on to the field under his training, I clearly see how I have so great of a responsibility ahead of me where God has me right now, to pour my life into the trainees who come here to prepare them for the Lord's work. I often long after the "I would rather be flying on the field" days. Reminiscing past years, God has graciously given me some invaluable experience, permitting me to bring to the training table as well:

I was born in a foreign country and raised a third generation missionary kid to a Godly family. I have dual citizenship. I had parents who loved me. I have gone barefoot, eaten, hunted and lived with tribal people in their surroundings. I have eaten monkey, alligator, snake, jaguar, wild birds of all kinds, taper, wild pig, and fish of all kinds, rodents and palm heart grubs. I have seen firsthand the tribal people literally pull their women to dismemberment, club each other's chest and bash in each other's

heads with poles. I have seen them cremate their dead and drink the bones. I have helped teach them to read and write their own language. I have been on initial tribal contacts. I have attended Bible College. I have driven many different sizes of school buses. I have gone to foreign countries as a child, single, married and with a family of 4. I have packed many suitcases, duffle bags, crates and barrels. I've left behind family, friends and churches. I have obtained passports and visas numerous times. I have traveled to distant countries by ship and by airline. I have flown small Cessna aircraft many times to foreign countries. I have lost close friends to guerrilla rebel forces, fatal aircraft accidents, sickness and old age. I have had to tell wives they've been widowed. I've comforted widows and families and cried together with them for their losses. I have said goodbye to close friends who have left the field for countless numbers of reasons, I have had co-workers with whom I have had, joys, sorrows, likenesses, differences, close and distant. Countless times I have made friends and then had to say goodbye to them. I have witnessed many different tribal groups of peoples turn from heathen darkness to light. I have helped build airstrips out of jungles and grasslands. I have helped build hangars for airplanes and houses for missionaries. I have suffered sicknesses from the most common cold to that of Malaria, Hepatitis, boils, allergies, broken bones and bites from all kinds of insects. I have had babies born and babies die in my airplane. I have flown the healthy, sick, living and dead. I have loaded and unloaded tons of cargo in and out of airplanes and pods. I have flown thousands of hours over remote jungle, mountains, rivers, streams, flood lands, roads, cities and states with countless passengers. I have maintained cars, outboard motors, lawnmowers, tractors, generators, airplanes, turbine and piston-powered-engines. I have repaired and rebuilt numerous aircraft and their components. I have mixed, poured and worked cement, shingled roofs, tinned roofs, palmed roofs, set block, rammed earth walls, dug holes and ditches. I've painted airplanes, houses, cars, motorcycles and bicycles. I have traveled by foot over jungle and savannah trails, over mountains and through valleys. I have traveled by paddle boats, dugout canoes, speedboats, houseboats and barges. I have swum in piranha, alligator, electric eels and anaconda inhabited rivers, streams and lakes. I have hunted lobster with spear guns while snorkeling. I have hunted with rifles, shotguns, bows and arrows and blow guns, in the day and at night from a boat, in tree stands and over land. I have caught piranha, large mouth peacock bass, large catfish, payara and all kinds of fish in-between. I have fished by harpoon, hand-line, fishing pole and or rod. I have roller-skated, roller-bladed, bowled, played ping-pong, soccer, basketball, volleyball, softball, water skied, snow skied, white water inner-tubed, motor cycled, bicycled, motor crossed, four wheeled, cliff jumped, tree jumped, mountain climbed, rock climbed, horse ridden, body surfed in the Pacific, Atlantic and Caribbean ocean. I have hand milked multiple cows, raised and butchered rabbits, pigs, cattle, chickens and wild game. I have raised and owned dogs, cut ears and tails of dogs and put dogs to sleep. I have shod horses, trimmed hoofs, trained horses, eaten horse meat and even shot an old horse once to put it out of its misery. I have preached and shared God's Word. I have taught Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, been a camp counselor and have lead youth groups. I have raised two wonderful children. I have been married for 22 years and I love my dear wife!

Well my dear friends, if you are still reading, I must say that God has blessed and given me a full life. How else could I have accomplished all these things if it weren't for the privilege of being in the Lord's work? Our very breath comes from Him. We are given a purpose to bring glory to the Lord and we can only do so as we live and abide in Him. In whatever we do, we must do it as unto Him. I thank Christ, who took upon himself the wrath of God by sacrificing his body and shedding his blood on the cross and I personally accept that gift of grace and love. Christ's death on the cross satisfied the wrath of God on our behalf. (Christ's Propitiation) The alternative is to take the wrath of God on ourselves. Christ's resurrection from the dead gives us the power to become new creatures in Him.

I want to take the time now, dear friends, to **THANK YOU** for the Blessing and influence you have been in our lives. We sure benefit from you who have been there and done that and are still participating!

We thank God for you often! May the Peace of God that passes all understanding be yours today! Have a wonderful Easter!

Waiting His soon return,

Larry and Kim Dye



Larry with Jim and Edna Ferguson at their farewell party April 2014

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